

**REGIONAL CONSORTIA, PARTNERSHIPS,  
MERGERS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR THE  
TRANSFORMATION OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN  
HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM**

by

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Significant expansion in order to admit an increasing number of school leavers, adult learners and a more diverse set of students has been a central feature of the many changes that have impacted on higher education systems in recent years. The South African Higher Education System has not only to cope with this expansion but it must also overcome the distortions and inequities generated by the ideology and practice of the discriminatory system of Apartheid. Further, it has to achieve this in a climate where material resources are limited and human resource skills are scarce.

One response to overcome the legacy of a skewed and fragmented system of higher education is the emergence of a number of regional consortia and a range of other partnerships. It is hoped through this means, institutions will collaborate in sharing scarce resources such as libraries, expensive equipment, academic development, research, rationalization of course offerings and possible movement towards mergers of institutions.

The central purpose of this study is to record baseline data of the existing consortia and other partnerships with respect to their location, composition, governance and financing mechanisms. Their projects, other activities and future plans were also documented. Emerging best practice as well as difficulties in establishing the consortia are identified. Trends in the rationalizing of course offerings and possible movement towards mergers were observed. It is hoped that the study will be of value to the Department of Education, the Council on Higher Education and the donor community in the implementation of the ambitious package of proposals contained in the White Paper on Higher Education. Regional cooperation has been identified in it as one of the priorities in the transformation of higher education. A number of donors are funding existing consortia.

The following regional consortia and other partnerships have been established :

- ❑ Eastern Seaboard Association of Tertiary Institutions (esATI) – this is an association of the three universities : Durban-Westville, Natal & Zululand and the four technikons Natal, ML Sultan, Mangosuthu and Technikon SA established in the early 1990s. It aims for a model of a single coordinated system of higher education. To this end the members have entered into an agreement to collaborate on a number of projects –a regional access program, a library project, a central admissions office, a public health school, a business school etc. A Board of 35 members governs it with representation from each of the members of the consortium. It is financed both by member subscriptions as well as by donors. Recently two technikons : Natal & ML Sultan have agreed to work towards a merger of their institutions while the consortium has recommitted itself to realizing the single coordinated system of higher education.
- ❑ CONSORTIUM OF OPEN LEARNING INSTITUTIONS OF SOUTH AFRICA (COLISA) – this is a confederal body of the three distance education institutions : University of South Africa, Vista University and Technikon, South Africa founded in 1996. They have agreed to pool their resources to address the massification of higher

education and collaborate in the development of course materials in order to provide for more efficient and cost effective distance education by utilizing advanced technology in the delivery of course materials. It is governed by a Board with representatives from each of the institutions, administered through an Executive Director and is financed through subscriptions by members.

- ❑ **THE FREE STATE HIGHER AND FURTHER EDUCATION TRUST** – established in 1998, it comprises 29 members spanning the higher education sector(HES) and the further education sector(FES) and includes representatives of the provincial administration, business and labor . It is governed by a representative Board of 32 persons and is managed by an Executive Committee of five members. Among its projects are bridging and access courses, a library project, quality assurance project, formative and vocationally oriented studies etc The Trust is funded through subscriptions and donor support.
- ❑ **EASTERN CAPE HIGHER EDUCATION ASSOCIATION (ECHEA)** – comprises the ten higher education institutions in the Eastern Cape : Universities of Port Elizabeth, Fort Hare, South Africa, Vista, Rhodes, Transkei and Technikons South Africa, Port Elizabeth, Border and Eastern Cape. The association wishes to work in partnership to optimize the higher education resources for the human, social and economic development of the region. The Board comprises the Chief Executive Officer of each institution and is managed through an Executive Director. The Association is financed through subscriptions and donor support. Among its projects are library services, central applications office, information technology cooperation, a joint chair of entrepreneurship etc.
- ❑ **FOUNDATION OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS OF THE NORTHERN METROPOLIS (FOTIM)** – this is a consortium of thirteen institutions comprising the Universities of Pretoria, Witwatersrand, Rand Afrikaans, South Africa, Vista, North-West, Medical University of South Africa, and Technikons Pretoria, Southern Africa, Witwatersrand, Northern Gauteng and Vaal Triangle established in 1996. It aims to cooperate with communities to meet the educational and training needs on a regional, national and international level. The Board of Fotim comprises a representative from each institution while an Executive Committee of four persons manages the day to day activities. It is funded through subscriptions, project funding and donor support. Among its current projects are : the Gaelic library project, strategic planning, information technology, staff development etc
- ❑ **THE ADAMASTOR TRUST** – is a cooperative venture in the Western Cape between the Universities of Cape Town, Stellenbosch, Western Cape and the Cape and Peninsula Technikons. It was registered as a Trust in 1993. It has progressed from infrastructural projects to a more strategic and systemic approach to regional cooperation. The Vice-Principals of each institution form the Board of Trustees while their meetings are attended by between 20-25 persons. There is no subscription besides contingency funds for projects and donor support. A part time Director manages the Trust. Among its projects are : the Calico library cooperative, information literacy, science and technology, science and industry leadership etc
- ❑ **THE COOPERATION BETWEEN UNISA AND POTCHEFSTROOM UNIVERSITY IN THE LIFE SCIENCES** –a formal agreement was entered into to provide education and training in the life sciences for UNISA students at

Potchefstroom University in the early 1990s. Study materials are provided by the distance mode while practical training is undertaken in the laboratories of Potchefstroom University. The subjects covered are : botany, zoology biology, biochemistry, physics, chemistry, microbiology and geology. It is claimed that this inter-university collaboration delivers quality science education to disadvantaged students cost effectively.

- ❑ **POTCHERSTROOM UNIVERSITY – TELEMATIC LEARNING SYSTEMS** – delivers inter-active educational programs using technology such as satellite broadcasts, television channels and the computer in multi-media. Courses in business administration, nursing, recreation and tourism management etc are offered in collaboration with California State University and the Open University in England.
- ❑ **EDUPARK – UNIVERSITY OF THE NORTH** : is a collaborative venture which includes a number of educational institutions, governments and the business sector sharing facilities, technology and equipment to provide a range of courses – commercial studies, communication, social studies, rural and urban development, hospitality and tourism etc. Positioned in the north as the gateway to Africa it is well placed to make a significant contribution to the development of the region.
- ❑ **THE UNIVERSITY TECHNIKON COLLABORATION – UTEC** : is a project managed by the Provincial Education Department of Mpumalanga. Its ultimate vision is to establish a Technological University in the Province. In the interim it undertakes a number of projects in collaboration with among others : Technikon Pretoria, Rand Afrikaans University, Witwatersrand Technikon, University of the Witwatersrand. Among its current projects are : a national diploma in agriculture, a further diploma in education, a science bridging/foundation course, bachelor of commerce, diploma course in travel and tourism, masters degree in public policy and development.
- ❑ **SCHOOLS OF PUBLIC HEALTH** – the lack of education and training in public health was identified as a glaring deficiency in the country. In response three schools of public health have been established as collaborative regional initiatives. These are the Western Cape School of Public Health, THUSANO School of Public Health in Gauteng and KwaZulu School of Public Health in Durban. In addition a National School of Public Health has been set up at the Medical University of South Africa in Garankuwa.
- ❑ **COMPARATIVE STUDIES** – collaborative initiatives and mergers are discussed with respect to the University of the West Indies, University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, Australia, the USA, the United Kingdom and the African Continent and their relevance for the South African collaborative initiatives

The regional consortia and other partnerships that have emerged in recent years despite difficulties have led to a better understanding among institutions and should have a positive role in the transformation of the HES.

The governance of the regional consortia is vested in a Board of Trustees that vary from 10 to 35 members. The day to day management is undertaken by an Executive Committee of 3-8 members, headed in most cases by an Executive Director supported by a small secretariat. The smallest consortium is COLISA with three institutions while the

largest is the Free State Higher and Further Education Trust, which comprises 29 institutions/organizations. The confederal model of governance in COLISA is posing problems for effective cooperation.

The consortia are financed through subscriptions by members as well as through donor support. There is considerable variation in the amounts subscribed between consortia e.g. esATI has an annual budget of R2.4 million whereas the Adamastor Trust only makes contingency contributions for meetings and projects.

The preferred mode of functioning of each of the consortia is through projects. Among the projects are library cooperation, a regional admissions office, access/foundation programs, information technology, the shared purchasing of expensive equipment etc. Of these projects the most developed and successful is the library project, which has been funded by the Mellon Foundation.

The Free State Higher and Further Education Trust is the only consortium that includes the FES as well as the Provincial Administration. While this is claimed to have advantages, it has been criticized as being too large, unwieldy and lacking a focus.

The fragmentation of the HES based on the HAIs and HDIs, Afrikaans speaking and English speaking institutions, universities and technikons will be impediments to effective cooperation unless adequately addressed.

Despite the progress made with a range of collaborative arrangements within the consortia, there is little evidence of cost savings or improvements in efficiency. Most of them are add on programs, which should enrich the HES.

A review of the literature indicates that there is a movement towards larger, multi-campus, multi-discipline institutions. In contrast South African higher education institutions are relatively small freestanding autonomous institutions. Although mergers have proven to be complex, time consuming exercises requiring considerable skills and resources their benefits could be considerable given the history of fragmentation in South Africa. However it would require political will and decisive action with appropriate financial leverage to make it a possibility in South Africa.

Despite the relatively short existence of regional consortia, a number lessons are being learnt. The accessing of available incentive funds for regional strategic planning should be high on the agenda of these consortia. Decisions of the Boards must be communicated to the institutions and in return feedback obtained. A representative Board to include members from outside the HES with a small Executive/Working Committee seems to be an appropriate governance structure. Projects should be carefully chosen and carried out to completion as they are likely to be catalysts for other projects. Geographical proximity should be taken into account in constituting the consortia. Tensions between e.g. the HDIs and HAIs could be minimized if they are openly discussed and understood. Engaging with the teaching/learning interface, developing leadership/management skills and planning for regional socio-economic development with a range of partners provide vast opportunities for collaboration for the regional consortia.



# **REGIONAL CONSORTIA, PARTNERSHIPS, MERGERS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR TRANSFORMATION OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM**

## **INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in most countries have undergone profound changes in recent years. Significant expansion of the system in order to admit an increasing cohort of school leavers, adult learners and generally a more diverse set of students than in the past has been a central part of this change. The progression from mass to elite and universal higher education is becoming a reality in an increasing number of countries.

While these global changes have been unfolding, the legacy of Apartheid has led to profound inequities and distortions of the South African Higher Education System (HES). It is fragmented along racial lines, incoherent with poor articulation between the different sectors. There is over provision of HEIs in some areas as in the Western Cape and in Johannesburg/Pretoria while other provinces such as Mpumalanga and Northern Cape have neither a university nor a technikon. Underprepared students from a poorly resourced and managed high school system result in high failure rates. Thus higher education participation rates of white and black students differ considerably – 70% :12%; there is a maldistribution of resources between advantaged and disadvantaged institutions; subsidy levels are R10,400 and R6200 respectively. A much larger HES than the FES makes the provision of higher education costly as well as failing to provide the necessary middle level skills or employable graduates.

Concurrently with these developments, the South African economy has slowed considerably from an over 5% growth rate in the 1970's to barely 1% in the 1980's and 1990's. Given these realities, the state subsidy to universities has declined from 85% to the current level of 60%. All the signs indicate that this level of funding is unlikely to increase. Despite these cuts, universities and technikons are expected to meet increasing demands for admission, mostly from the disadvantaged sector. This brings with it attendant challenges of providing academic support, more residences, unpaid student fees and a host of other problems associated with expansion and inflationary pressures. In addition, institutions are expected to improve the quality of their program offerings and be responsive to the socio-economic needs of the country.

### ***RATIONALE FOR MERGERS, PARTNERSHIPS AND REGIONAL CONSORTIA***

One response to meeting these challenges has been the emergence in recent years of a range of partnerships including regional consortia. A number of underlying factors have led to their establishment – financial constraints, the legacy of Apartheid which established a skewed racially based and fragmented system of higher education with over provision of similar or identical programs in some areas and under provision in other areas.

Specifically the benefits are expected to be :

- collaborative arrangements between institutions in sharing library resources, expensive equipment etc.

- reduction in duplication and overlap of programs
- a regional admissions office to streamline the present cumbersome and expensive admission procedures
- promote open learning, resource based and distance education
- exchange and sharing of staff
- collaboration in research projects
- development of joint access programs
- share strategies of academic development for both staff and students

It is uncertain whether the envisaged collaboration will lead to rationalization of program offerings or even the possibility of mergers of institutions. While institutions in the South African higher education system are exclusively freestanding autonomous institutions, the position is somewhat different in the world at large. The University of London is a loose federation of a number of colleges, Universities in India have affiliated colleges which number in the 100s, close to half of the 14 million higher education students in the USA are enrolled in multi-campus institutions and there are many examples in the unified national system of higher education institutions in Australia (Meek,1992).

Clark Kerr(1971), lists the following benefits of multi-campus institutions

- It concentrates external relations such as with the state in a single office where it can be better performed
- It facilitates long range planning – expansion, new endeavors, differentiation of functions among campuses
- It makes possible the achievement of diversity among campuses
- It facilitates the development of new innovative campuses in places of need
- It encourages better management with the aid of specialists and with the exchange of experiences among campuses
- Expands the range of available disciplines
- Better provision for transfer of credit both within and between disciplines
- An enhanced level of student services
- Increased strength of academic departments
- Better facilities for teaching and research
- Concentration of research development effort and better possibilities of accessing funds
- Increased opportunities for career advancement of academic and general staff
- Increased access and better library and computing facilities
- Increased purchasing power for equipment and materials
- A more competitive basis for attracting overseas students and visiting staff

Kerr also lists some liabilities of these multi-campus institutions :

- It is more bureaucratic and less collegial in its management approach
- Faculty senates and student governments have less influence
- Centralized planning denies expectations to many people
- The board of trustees is further removed from the local atmosphere of the campus
- There are more points of possible friction over who does what and how
- It is more open to control by an external authority than a series of campuses

- Sharing of authority between the central bureaucracy and the campus administration generates conflict

The key question arising from the establishment of these multi-campus institutions is ‘one of differentiation or homogenization of higher education’ (Meek,1992). Neave (1983) argues that “all systems of higher education display a dynamic towards integration”. Government policy is an important determinant of sustaining an integrated or a non-integrated system. Clark (1983) however notes that the critical question is not one of integration or differentiation but one of ‘legitimization of roles for different types of institutions’ and campuses within the same system.

A review of the international literature demonstrates that mergers and cooperation in the form of linkages contain elements of both competition and cooperation. Competition implies a pre-supposition of inherent inequality between institutions (Pritchard, 1993). This has implications for the South African higher education system considering that institutions established under the Apartheid order have been under resourced and disadvantaged in a number of ways (NCHE Report, 1996). The challenge for the South African HES is how to proceed with cooperation with the realization that competition will remain an inherent aspect of the system and to manage the ensuing tensions that are likely to be generated.

Mergers can be driven by a growth strategy or by the necessity to overcome financial difficulties. Innovations in curriculum reform, new program offerings, strengthening faculty resources, administrative efficiencies and economies of scale are some of the intended benefits. Further, “The occasion presents a fine moment to redefine the university’s identity and enhance its reputation”(Martin & Samels, 1993-94). These authors also point out that difficulties should not be underestimated – which programs to be reduced and which expanded, ranks and tenure of faculties, size and composition of new board of trustees, staff unions with collective bargaining agreements etc.

Despite the complexities of merging institutions, an emerging international trend is “the movement away from higher education systems of many small, specialized, single-purpose institutions towards systems consisting of smaller numbers of large, multi-purpose, multi-discipline institutions” (Goedegebuure & Meek,1991).

## **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY AND METHODOLOGY**

The central purpose of this study is to record baseline data of the various regional consortia as the program for the transformation of the South African HES gets underway.

The study will :

- ◆ List and locate the existing regional consortia and other partnerships
- ◆ Determine their vision, mission and objectives
- ◆ Outline their governance structures of policy making, administration and implementation
- ◆ Describe their current projects
- ◆ Determine financing mechanisms
- ◆ Describe their future plans

It is somewhat premature to make any substantive judgement of the successes or failures of these consortia as many of them are in the early stages of development. However it may be possible to identify best practices that could be shared; alternatively to identify difficulties that need to be overcome. An attempt will be made to discern if there are emerging trends of rationalizing of course offerings and any movement towards mergers of institutions/campuses.

Rationalizing of course offerings and establishing a cost effective higher education system is an important feature of the NCHE Report and the White Paper on higher education. It is hoped that the information and analysis of the existing regional consortia and other partnerships would be of assistance to the Department of Education in formulating the national three-year plans. It should also provide the Council on Higher Education (CHE) with a useful source of information for advising the Minister as well as the donor community in reviewing and reassessing funding strategies for maximum return. The institutions should also benefit by reflecting on their own consortia in the light of national findings, sharing best practices and learning of common difficulties to be overcome in the establishing of consortia.

### ***METHODOLOGY***

The following methodology was utilized in compiling the report :

- Survey of the literature – a literature survey of mergers, regional consortia and other partnerships in higher education systems was undertaken with the assistance of the UNISA Library. Some 75 pages of literature references were found and of these, thirty of the relevant articles accessed, studied and utilized in the preparation of this study
- State Documents – the NCHE Report(1996), the White Paper(1997), the Higher Education Act(1997) and implementation documents from the Department of Education(1998) were reviewed in relation to their pronouncements on regional consortia and mergers
- Visits were made to the regions and interviews conducted with each of the Executive Directors of the different consortia. In addition, interviews were undertaken with members of the Board of Trustees; members of staff of the institutions and officials of the DOE

- ❑ Relevant documents were collected from each of the consortia, studied, analyzed and appropriate sections included in the report

The generic terms “rationalization” and “consolidation” can apply to reductions or closures of entire institutions or of programs and various new associations within or between organizational units. The deliberative terms are “merger, affiliation and collaboration” signaling a hierarchy of measures ranging from “takeover to cooperation “. “Amalgamation could be either “integrated” or “federated”; an integrated model has a single corporate identity and management structure whereas a federated model allows for recognition of sub-institutional entities e.g. campus with a high degree of autonomy (Gallager, 1997).

### *GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS*

*NCHE Report(1996)* – After considerable debate, the Commission recommended as follows: “The Commission proposes that the Higher Education Council encourages the establishment of non-statutory regional structures with a balance of internal as well as external stakeholders. These structures could be consulted on the planning needs of the region, mergers, rationalization, program distribution, the sharing of resources and the development of higher education institutions. Earmarked funding should be made available for such co-operation”. It specifically used the word region rather than province because co-operation could result from clusters of institutions from within or across existing provincial boundaries. It further specified the following guidelines for such cooperation – physical proximity, program specialization, practical considerations and provision to include the needs and views of provinces where there are no universities or technikons. One commissioner in a minority report, was of the view that the NCHE should have taken a stronger stand on this issue arguing that a serious regional review of institutional plans should be a structured requirement of the planning process.

*Education White Paper of 1997- A Program for the Transformation of Higher Education* : With respect to institutional planning the White Paper states “ In addition, emphasis will be placed on regional reviews of institutional plans as an integral part of the national planning process. This will be intended to promote regional co-ordination and collaboration as part of the national plan to enhance articulation of programs, mobility of learners between institutions, the sharing of resources, including scarce academic staff, library and information facilities. It is also intended to reduce program duplication and overlap. The Ministry will provide incentives to encourage and facilitate regional planning and co-ordination”. In the section on funding it explicitly states “Incentive funding will be available on a selective basis to support the costs involved in regional collaboration among institutions which aim to consolidate, merge, share or otherwise collectively improve the efficient use of their facilities and resources for training, teaching, research or community service.”

*Higher Education Act of 1997* – In terms of this Act, the “Minister may after consulting the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and by notice in the Gazette, merge two or more

public higher education institutions into a single public higher education institution.”(Section 23 (1)).

In Section 38 it states :

- (1) Public higher education institutions may cooperate with each other in any manner to achieve the optimal utilization of resources and the performance of their functions.
- (2) Public higher education institutions may establish regional or national structures to assist and facilitate the co-operation contemplated in sub-section (1)
- (3) The Minister may provide financial incentives to such structures and to public higher education institutions participating in such structures to achieve the aims of such co-operation..

*National and Institutional Planning Framework for the Higher Education System – Department of Education, May 1998* lists Inter-Institutional Co-operation as one of its four priorities. It believes it could eliminate unnecessary duplications in academic and administrative service provision. It will therefore provide incentives through the provision of earmarked funds designed to :

- increase the number and proportion of academic programs offered jointly by institutions in a region
- encourage inter-institutional research projects
- encourage the joint utilization of the human and physical resources available to higher education institutions in the region

It is clear that the Ministry went beyond the proposals of the NCHE Report by incorporating the power of merging institutions in the Higher Education Act. The fact that the CHE would be consulted provides the institutions and other stakeholders with a means of influencing the process.

Subsidy cuts and pressure from the Government led the Committee of University Principals to embark on a program of rationalization of course offerings in the late 1980s. While some progress had been made, political developments as well as complications of dealing with advantaged and disadvantaged institutions aborted the process. However the financial state of most universities have deteriorated since that time. This among other factors has encouraged the development of regional consortia and other partnerships.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE CONSORTIA AND OTHER PARTNERSHIPS

### *EASTERN SEABOARD ASSOCIATION OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS-esATI*

The idea of a regional consortium in this region was articulated as early as 1991. “Such a system would have the advantage of planning rationally for regional needs, of distributing resources equitably and of existing cooperatively rather than competitively. One envisages a five-campus system for Natal, comprising the two campuses of the University of Natal, the Universities of Durban-Westville and Zululand and the Distance Education section of UNISA. Exchange of staff and students, collaborative research, and common allegiance to one university system are some of the advantages”.(Reddy,1991)

This consortium was one of the firsts to be established with discussions, which began in the early 1990s. It was formulated as the Regional Institutional Cooperation Project in 1993 and became an Association as esATI in 1996.

*The esATI's Statement of Intent* : “While being conscious of the dynamics of national systematic restructuring on the one hand and of creative institutional initiatives on the other, we believe that it is vitally important to begin a process of cooperation among institutions of higher education in the Natal region. Such regional initiatives could form the basis of a more co-ordinated and well functioning national system----Despite our differing histories and experiences, we as participating institutions commit ourselves to a process of regional cooperation that will allow for both bilateral as well as multilateral action.”

*Vision, Aims and Objectives* :To establish a model for a single coherent coordinated higher education system as spelt out in the White Paper on Higher Education. In the long term it would aim to establish a regional system on the lines of the master plan of the California post-secondary education system. There should be solid administrative and academic links but each institution would retain its identity. Entrants to the tertiary system would comprise school leavers or through recognition of prior learning. They would enter either a distance learning stream or a contact learning system. These streams of tertiary education would be offered by a range of institutions within esATI comprising undergraduate courses, postgraduate study and research.

While this vision has considerable support it does not appear to be shared by all the institutions in the consortium. Moreover while it is generally welcomed by the Rectors/Vice-Chancellors it does not have the same degree of support among the rest of the staff of the institutions.

### *Programs*

The following programs of esATI are either underway or are in the process of development.

- ❑ The teach, test, teach (TTT) program of the University of Natal is now the Regional Access Program(RAP) of esATI. It currently enrolls 1200 students per annum with each student paying a fee of R460.00. It is thus heavily subsidized by esATI. Most of the students are disadvantaged, black, women and from rural areas. They attain a 40% pass rate and are easily placed in one of the institutions for tertiary study. This has

resulted in a significant saving for the University of Natal as it is now being subsidized by esATI.

- ❑ Library project – a library project supported by the Mellon Foundation has been launched. The purchasing of journals would be rationalized; a common cataloguing system is being developed and a buying consortium has been planned.
- ❑ Music – A venture by the three and possibly four departments of music in the region to create the first regional school of music in the country, housed in one institution but with possible specialist satellite campuses. A business plan is being prepared for the next esATI Board meeting
- ❑ Regional Business School – aims to establish a regional school with a core business education curriculum, to offer a coherent program of courses of varying duration and of varying levels of development from certificate, diploma to the masters in business administration
- ❑ Central Applications Office(CAO) – a consultants study showed that the establishing of a regional central applications office is feasible and would result in significant savings to the institutions as well as students. A director of the project has been appointed, pilot schemes would be in place in 1999 and it is expected that the CAO would be fully operational by the year 2000. The National Department of Education is supportive of the project as a prototype for a national central applications office to provide information, facilitate applications to tertiary institutions and reduce costs.
- ❑ Public Health Initiative – an initiative to coordinate the activities of numerous providers of health education and training in the eastern seaboard region; further information is provided in the section on Regional Schools of Public Health
- ❑ International Partnerships – forging partnerships that stretch across the globe from institutions in the esATI region to foreign institutions of higher education; the existing partnerships are with University of California(Berkley), Michigan State University; Northern Michigan State University; Kangan Institute of Technical and Further Education ( TAFE), Australia
- ❑ Women in Research – a project of the Center for Science Development(CSD) coordinated by esATI within the region of KwaZulu-Natal and focussing on issues of access and redress
- ❑ Research Cluster Program – a high priority quality development and assurance program with the University of California aims for a new generation of high caliber researchers/teachers in the region
- ❑ Regional Institute of Tertiary Studies – offers a masters course in tertiary studies to esATI member institutions in response to concerns about the quality of teaching in universities and technikons
- ❑ Tourism Research Network – brings together researchers and students from six of the seven member institutions and from a number of NGOs in the region, who are able to undertake research collaboratively for the KwaZulu-Natal Tourism Authority
- ❑ Joint Research Equipment Program – a service that encourages the regional institutions to submit to the FRD a single, prioritized list of requests for expensive research equipment

**Finance** : Each member institution pays its dues to esATI based on a weighted factor which takes into account the operational expenditure as well as the full time equivalent



number of students(FTEs). This amounts to 0.1% of the operational expenditure of the institutions. The total expenditure of the 8 institutions in the region amounts to approximately R1.2 billion and of which esATI receives R1.2 million. However the total expenditure of esATI is R2.4 million. The balance of the budget is financed from donations – Ford and Mellon Foundations; from parastatals such as the Center for Science Development(CSD) of the Human Sciences Research Council(HSRC).A fund raising subcommittee has just been established.

**Governance :** The governance of esATI is vested in a Board of 35 members from the 8 member institutions. The Chair of the Board is not a member of one of the institutions. The Board acts as the management committee. This is apparently a cumbersome arrangement and there are plans to revamp the system. It is planned to expand the Board to 50 members to include representatives from commerce, industry and labor. It would meet once per year and be responsible for policy making. A management committee of 8 members would meet four times a year and be responsible for the management and administration of esATI. There is also a TRUST, which is the legal persona of esATI.

**AN ASSESSMENT :**esATI is emerging as a catalyst for change in the region as embodied in the White Paper and Higher Education Act; an example being the planned central admissions office. It is also planned to develop a regional quality assurance system and a management information system. There is consensus that prototypes of manageable structures are better developed at a regional level prior to considering a much larger centrally driven office.

There are mixed signals about the future of esATI.; there is yet to develop a shared vision. Six of the institutions have been very supportive of esATI; the other two have been ambivalent – the one because it had just appointed a new Vice-Chancellor; the other being a national distance institution claimed that it would be very stretched if it was to become involved in every region. A number of the institutions have recently appointed new Senior Executives to their management positions. Being unaware of the statement of intent as well as the factors that led to esATI, has led to suspicion of the motives of the consortium. Following attendance of Board meetings and explanation these concerns have abated. Further, the constant change in membership is a problem. If rationalization threatens job security then it is likely to be resisted e.g. in the merger of the four music departments. When this was reaching finality, one institution decided to withdraw. Although a well-researched study proposed one integrated business school for the area, a second one has been established and a third one is in the planning.

With regard to the administration one proposal is to appoint a project manager e.g. to manage distance education as a new project for esATI. Another is to establish a corporate office as a supra- regional institutional body to direct the process of merger.

The two Technikons duplicate about 60% of their programs and yet despite discussions for the merger of the institutions little has emerged. In 1996, the ML Sultan and Natal Technikon Councils agreed in principle for the two institutions to merge by forming one Council and one Executive Management. A steering committee subsequently decided to

include Mangosuthu Technikon in the merger. Serious senior management problems in one institution and the appointment of a new Principal in another brought a halt to the process. The Department of Education, which was aware of these developments and encouraged, them but appears to have taken no subsequent action. The process has been revived but the momentum has been lost.

In a commissioned review of esATI, Swemmer, 1998 made the following observations :

- It is visionary, has raised awareness of regional cooperation and is essential
- There is suspicion of the motives for rationalization among the institutions
- Regional cooperation is not as yet a mainstream concern of institutions e.g. strategic planning is still an institutional matter
- There is need for greater communication of the work of esATI among institutions using a variety of strategies-electronic, newsletters, campus coordinators etc
- A number of recommendations are made to improve administration and governance

Of interest is the following from an advertisement for a Facilitator : Merger of M L Sultan and Technikon Natal “The respective Councils of the ML Sultan Technikon and Technikon Natal have committed themselves to a merger of the two institutions. It has been agreed that the model to be adopted in respect of the merger would be that of a single institution governed by a single Council.” (Sunday Tribune, August 16,1998)

The following statement of intent was issued at a Vice-Chancellors and senior managers summit of esATI held on the 27 July 1998 : “As Vice-Chancellors and senior managers of the member organizations of the eastern seaboard Association of Tertiary Institutions (esATI), we commit ourselves unanimously and with the enthusiasm to the creation of a single, co-ordinated, learner centered system of higher education in the region. We have agreed to identify and to set in motion a process, within a specified time frame, to select an appropriate model for this single co-ordinated system of higher education, which is consistent with the requirements of the Higher Education Act of 1997. We have also committed ourselves, with immediate effect, to co-operative academic and administrative planning for our member institutions. We reaffirm and recommit ourselves to the values, goals and intentions set out in the esATI statement of intent that forms the basis for a single co-ordinated system and provides guiding principles in the search for an appropriate model. We will take the co-operative venture forward as rapidly as possible in the interests of the students, the region and national needs. In the process of doing so, we will consult with our Councils, Senates and other appropriate bodies as specific proposals for cooperation come to the fore.”

These two recent developments provide a fresh momentum not only for regional cooperation within esATI but also of movement towards integration, rationalizing course offerings and possible mergers.

#### *CONSORTIUM OF OPEN LEARNING INSTITUTIONS OF SOUTH AFRICA-COLISA*

*Mission :* COLISA as a confederal body of higher education institutions will provide separately and jointly comprehensive and quality learning opportunities in terms of open learning principles within a flexible learning system by facilitating synergistic ventures in

teaching, research, community service programs and administrative systems to realize economies of scale and effective use of resources so as to create a culture of life long learning in higher education to meet the students expectations and the future needs of a global and competitive economy.

*Aims and Objectives* : The three dedicated distance education institutions viz., the University of South Africa, Vista University and Technikon, Southern Africa came together to form COLISA in 1996 to pool their resources to meet the challenges posed by the new framework for higher education as outlined in the White Paper and the new Higher Education Act. These challenges in particular are :

- increased participation and access
- diminishing resources
- greater effectiveness and efficiency
- incorporation of advanced technology
- quality assurance

COLISA supports an integrated flexible learning system with a network of learning centers and aims at :

- the identification of areas of collaboration between higher education institutions and their ability to address the massification of higher education
- facilitating collaboration between distance education and face-to-face institutions in the development of resource based courses and materials
- ensuring that the various programs are complementary and address the needs of society and industry
- promoting increase in capacity by the use of advanced technology

*Governance and Administration* : COLISA is governed by a Board in terms of its constitution. The Board shall comprise :

- the Vice-Chancellors of each of the constituent institutions
- two further representatives appointed by each constituent institution
- the Executive Director
- such other persons or representatives as are unanimously elected by the Board

It is of interest that Councils of each institution makes provision for membership of the other institutions. COLISA has appointed task teams to investigate a range of issues – confederal pact, finance and administration, courseware design and development, joint offerings and rationalization, learner support and community colleges, student governance, human resource development, technology, quality assurance, communication, fund raising and marketing.

*Financing* : COLISA is funded from three sources

- (i) contribution for operating expenses from each partner
- (ii) each partner contributes to a development fund
- (iii) donor funding

Each partner has made a contribution of R70,000 and currently COLISA has a budget of R500,000. It is envisaged that COLISA will in the future generate income by marketing its services.

*Current Projects :*

- The Cyber Connection Project
- Central Applications Office and Joint Registration
- Joint Examinations Project
- Joint Accesses Courses
- Joint Courseware Design and Development
- Developing a Quality Assurance System
- Collaboration with Ministry of Science, Technology and Vocational Training, Zambia
- Collaboration with Indira Gandhi Open University, India
- Collaboration with Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU), Bangkok, Thailand

*An Assessment and the Future of COLISA :* COLISA has been in existence for a relatively short time of less than two years and is therefore in a stage of early development. With some 225,000 students, it has the potential of producing quality courseware cost effectively through economies of scale. Some 150,000 students could be served jointly at learning centers. The considerable resources at their disposal such as the library at UNISA and the printing facilities at TSA would provide this collaborative undertaking with enormous capacity.

Critical to increasing the throughput rate of students is the provision of learner support. This is best accomplished by a nationwide network of such centers utilizing the spare and underused capacity of many existing institutions. The avoidance of duplication through such collaboration would be one of the main strengths of this consortium.

Despite these strengths there are some emerging negative features. A lack of commitment by some role players is causing concern e.g. the difficulty of members attending meetings. Cumbersome internal procedures for approval is causing undue delays in the launching of projects. A lack of financial resources, which is affecting the entire higher education system, is not helpful to the development of COLISA. Despite a promise of collaboration, the Diploma Course in Distance Education is being offered by one institution only.

The confederal nature of the association gives COLISA little authority to move rapidly in its development no matter how desirable the projects and programs. The Senate of at least one institution would not agree to a form of stronger association. It is a moot point whether such a loose association of institutions will result i.e. real collaboration, rationalization of programs, cost savings and movement towards a merger.

The developments within COLISA would have to be carefully monitored to ascertain whether its activities are of an add on type or collaboration that would result in rationalization of course offerings, joint production of quality courseware and a cost effective, quality system of distance education.

### *THE FREE STATE HIGHER AND FURTHER EDUCATION TRUST*

This Trust, which was in a developing stage during the last few years, has been formally established in 1998. It comprises some 29 different institutions in the Free State area spanning the HES and FES as well as several non-government organizations working in the educational area.

*Statement of Intent* : a commitment to fundamentally restructuring the further and higher education sectors

- regional and national strategies based on the White Paper and the Higher Education Act will be developed to address the fragmented and inequitable and unplanned system of higher education
- their commitment will be underpinned by some of these values :
  - a strong , comprehensive and well articulated further and higher education system that will turn out quality graduates and diplomates for a society in transition
  - capacity building to address issues of equity and inequality
  - the involvement of communities in shaping the educational system
  - rationalization to create a cost effective educational system
  - the development of joint ventures between the partners
  - a cooperative rather than a competitive approach
  - establishing partnerships with a range of stakeholders – other educational institutions, government and the cooperative sector
- despite differing histories and experiences, the participating institutions commit themselves to a process of regional cooperation and the removal of institutional barriers in this context
- The process will include short, medium and long term changes to existing policies through negotiations to face their complex challenges

*Governance and Administration* : The Trust will be governed by a Board of Trustees of 32 persons representing all of the constituent members. The Trust has a dual function : to receive fees and grants and to utilize such funds for academic and related development activities. An Executive Committee of five members manages the day to day affairs of the Trust through its Directorate. The Trust has appointed a Directorate with permanent and/or temporary staff with executive powers to manage the initiatives of the Trust.

In addition, The Free State Higher and Further Education Training Forum consisting of 20 members from the represented institutions will deliberate on educational policies and principles and advise the Board of Trustees on practical educational initiatives and projects.

A Memorandum of Agreement embracing the above principles has been entered into by the 29 partners of the consortium

*Finance* : Each member institution pays an annual fee of R2000.00. In addition, the Trust is supported by the Ford and Mellon Foundations. The projects generate their own funding.

*Projects* : The following projects are either underway or are being planned :

- A Foundation Course to bridge, channel and provide access to learners into a general, formative and vocationally oriented certificate/degree/diploma
- FRELICO-Free State Libraries and Information Consortium
- General formative and vocationally directed studies at certificate, diploma and degree levels
- Preparation of a Further and Higher Education Profile of the Free State Province
- The Youth Development Pilot Project for out of school youth in the Free State
- Regional Quality Assurance Project
- Research Project in Further and Higher Education Studies
- Staff Development – Institutional Links Project : Collaborative Staff Development for Quality Teaching and Learning in Further and Higher Education
- Telematic Learning Support System for the Free State Region

*The Bridging And Access Program* : A number of programs have been initiated under this program, the best-established being OLDEAP – Open Learning and Distance Education Access Program. In 1996, its name was changed to the Resource-Based Learning Career Preparation Program. It began in 1997 with a registration of close to 200 students. The students registered in four subjects – English, Basic Course in Life Long Learning, Sociology and Mathematics; a further four subjects were added later – Chemistry, Psychology, Economics and Accounting. This is conceived as career preparation program for students with poor educational backgrounds that are barriers to progress to post secondary education. This package is negotiated with the tertiary institutions in the region so as to enable them to admit successful students from the program and give them credits. The institutions in the region are – University of the Free State, University of South Africa, Vista University, University of the North at Qwaqwa, Technikon Free State, Technikon South Africa as well as technical and teacher training colleges. The course is being offered in seven different sub-regions in order to provide ready access to students. A central feature of the program is to provide the students with well-designed and developed study material with accompanying support of facilitators.

*QwaQwa Campus of the University of the North* : As part of the Apartheid Governments strategy of establishing separate universities the campus of QwaQwa was established in the Free State as part of the University of the North situated hundreds of kilometers away in Pietersburg in the Northern Province.

It began in 1982 with 225 students. In 1994 it had 2371 students with five Faculties and about 200 staff. In 1994 it produced 1789 graduates. Clearly under a single coordinated system of higher education as described in the White Paper its present status of being linked to the University of the North is being reassessed. Four options are being explored :

- Complete independence
- Autonomy within a provincial system of tertiary system of higher education
- Merger with the University of the Free State
- Retain status quo

It would seem given the progress made by the Free State Higher and Further Education Trust, QwaQwa Campus could find a natural home within this Trust. Its precise

relationship within the Trust would have to await negotiations but clearly linkages /merger with the University of the Free State or Technikon, rationalization of programs as well as developing niche areas as a developmental campus of a rural area should be high priorities. Recent information is that the Department of Education has requested the QwaQwa Campus and the University of the Free State to explore ways of collaboration and or merger

*An Assessment :* In general, members are satisfied if not enthusiastic at the initial achievements as well as the direction taken by the Trust. It is perceived with some evidence that the cooperative ventures as well as the potential for rationalization and the avoidance of duplication of programs will leverage donor funding. There are emerging opportunities for industry and business to cooperate with institutions in training as well as in the creation of jobs e.g. the “incubator project” in the area of small, medium and micro enterprises.

A view was expressed that the Trust should widen its area of membership to include institutions from Lesotho.

The Technical College Sector found the Trust to provide it with resources such as staff, equipment and materials. They are cooperating constructively with both the Technikons and the Universities in the Career Prep Program They are of the view that the Trust can mobilize further financial resources as well as help to establish international links.

The Trust has brought together a diverse set of stakeholders who now have a better understanding of each other. In time, the two Technical Colleges could merge with each campus offering programs in different areas e.g. Hillsideview Technical College offers the natural sciences and technology while Bloemfontein offers business courses.

The rationalization of the Colleges of Education, Nursing and Agriculture will prove to be a sensitive and difficult task. The Trust is well placed to play a facilitating role in resolving this thorny issue.

Another unique feature of the Trust is that it includes the Provincial Department of Education. This membership is fully supported by the partners of the Trust. The Education Department sees much merit in the Trust in mobilizing funds and avoiding duplication of programs. In particular the library project – FRELICO that may benefit the Colleges has been welcomed by the Department. The colleges have either no or poorly developed libraries The Trust played a key role in drawing a proposal for accessing R15.9 million of Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) funds to train out of school youth in the province. It was a plan that was highly acclaimed among those submitted from the various provinces. The needs study being undertaken by the Development Bank of South Africa as one of the projects of the Trust will be of considerable value to the Institutions as well the Department of Education and Industry.

However, despite these favorable developments at least one of the stakeholders has reservations of the Trust. While strongly supporting the notion of regional cooperation, the concept of including the Further Education and the Higher Education Sectors in a single Trust is not favored because of the distinct areas of operation of the two sectors. Rather, it is claimed the approach should be one of encouraging articulation between the sectors. This stakeholder is of the view that the Trust has begun to operate in a prescriptive manner and has created mistrust among its members. Its request for observer

status was not accepted. The same stakeholder would support merger on a confederal basis of the Technikon and University into a single University of the Free State with a technological campus and a humanities campus.

The distance education institutions in the area are generally supportive of the Trust in the development of open and flexible systems of learning. There is much space for cooperation in the production of quality courseware and provision of learner centers with tutor support. Examination centers could be also be shared.

#### *EASTERN CAPE HIGHER EDUCATION ASSOCIATION (ECHEA)*

ECHEA comprising the ten Higher Education Institutions of the Eastern Cape – Universities of Port Elizabeth, Fort Hare, South Africa, Vista, Rhodes, Transkei and Technikons of South Africa, Port Elizabeth, Border and Eastern Cape formed an Association in late 1996

Factors leading to formalization of cooperative arrangements in the region :

- ◆ Demand for change in educational models
- ◆ Minimize duplication of services
- ◆ Poor articulation and transfer possibilities between institutions
- ◆ Severe constraints of access into the system
- ◆ Availability of new technology that promotes cooperation
- ◆ A willingness to strike a balance between self interest and interest of the region
- ◆ Reduced financial resources
- ◆ The need for market-relevant education
- ◆ Recommendations of the National Commission on Higher Education
- ◆ Availability of donor funds to support cooperative ventures

*Mission* : “As an Association of Universities and Technikons working in partnership with all stakeholders in the Eastern Cape, we optimize the region’s higher education resources, equitably and effectively, to meet the educational requirements which are linked to the human, social and economic development needs of the region and of South Africa”.

The Association shall operate in accordance with the following principles :

- Inclusively of all stakeholders
- Consensus-Seeking
- Capacity for implementable and effective policies
- State Responsibility-rests in governance and management within institutions
- Effectiveness in decision making
- To function in a transparent and publicly accountable manner
- Mandating-respect of parties to consult constituencies and obtain mandates
- Accountability-parties retain freedom to function in their own sphere of responsibility
- Sensitivity to race and gender in selection of Board members

*Governance* : This is predicated on being inclusive, representative and capable of taking effective decisions. The Board shall consist of the Chief Executive Officer or her/his nominee of each participating University and Technikon as members. The Executive Director is also a member of the Board. In addition, the Principal/Rector or one



representative of each of the colleges of teacher training, technical, nursing and agriculture shall serve on the Board as participant observer members. The Board shall be the highest decision making body of the Association. It shall have the right to delegate powers to any committees, which it may from time to time establish. The functions of the Board shall be :

- To agree on the framework of values for the Associations activities
- To deliberate and seek agreement on any matter relating to the intent and mission
- To receive, debate, amend and/or approve proposed measures which may arise on the basis of submissions by committees, outside parties etc
- To monitor commitments made to the association by the member institutions
- To monitor and amend where necessary the Association's Statement of Intent or other aspects contained in the Constitution.

An Executive Committee, consisting of the Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson of the Board and Director shall be responsible for the day to day management of the affairs of the Board.

Strategic Focus : In pursuance of its mission the Association shall focus on :

- Establishing partnerships in higher education involving colleges, universities and technikons
- Establish higher education as a key player in the economy and development of the region
- Seek agreement on the process of articulation in education and training
- Establish and maintain formal structures to facilitate the Associations activities
- Initiate projects and activities directed at achieving the aims of the Association

#### *Programs undertaken by ECHEA*

- ❑ South Eastern Academic Library Services (SEALS) : The project is moving forward with the help of donations from Donald Woods and the Mellon Foundation. Emphasis is placed on inter-institutional networking and sharing information. The Director and Librarians of the institutions have been attending various meetings and workshops in order to update their resources as well as seek ways of cooperation e.g. a visit was made to the successful Calico Library project of the Western Cape. Discussions are underway with officials of Lower Saxony State of Germany to explore a library partnership project.
- ❑ The Central Applications Office (CAO) : This office will seek to streamline tertiary admissions through a central registration software program, universal application forms and a shared record system, as well as additional electronic applications routes through the use of e-mail. This pilot CAO will be a first step towards a central admissions system with an electronic “Admissionet” linking all the admissions offices. I.T.S. will submit a proposal for a CAO for ECHEA. Discussions were held with esATI to discuss the CAO concept, which has reached an advanced stage. A subsequent meeting was convened by the Department of Education in support of a CAO. It seems that the esATI CAO is to be used as a pilot project for the other regions. Under the circumstances it is not clear as to the progress other CAOs will make in the interim.

- ❑ Interim Steering Committee (ISC) and Regional Research : ECHEA has representation on the ISC. A database on regional higher education development research sponsored by the FRD has been completed. It has yet to be analyzed as to what potential might emerge from the report for collaborative developmental research for the region.
- ❑ Information Technology Co-Operation : A regional inter-institutional cooperative endeavor involving computer courses and information systems has been initiated. It is expected to play a role in the creation of an electronic “backbone” linking member campuses and carrying the envisaged library network as well as the CAO

*Funding* : Each member institution contributed an initial sum of R50,000 towards the expenses of the Association. That money is now exhausted and new funding arrangements will have to be negotiated. In addition the Ford Foundation provided a grant of 100,000 dollars. The Mellon Foundation provided a grant of 50,000 US dollars for a feasibility study of the library cooperative project.

The Association occupies temporary premises in the Provincial Department of Education's offices. The appointment of a new Director is likely to result in the movement of the offices to one of the institutions. While there are cost savings in locating on a single campus it will have to be carefully negotiated due to the sensitivity of this issue.

*An Evaluation of the Current Status of ECHEA and Prospects for the Future* : A questionnaire from the Executive Director directed at staff of ECHEA institutions, 15 months after its establishment elicited a very poor response; a second questionnaire was only slightly better; in some institutions no staff member responded. Clearly, a greater commitment from staff is required if ECHEA is to become a meaningful regional consortium.

The fact that only Vice-Chancellors/Rectors are members of the Trust and that their decisions have not filtered through to the staff appears to be a real difficulty. One Dean had not heard about ECHEA and when he did, his view was that there can be no cooperation until the playing fields between the HDIs and the HAIs were leveled. Another Vice-Chancellor of the group has yet to attend a single meeting.

Further constraining factors for the development of the project are :

- ◆ Crisis management of institutions with exclusion of students either due to poor performance or unpaid fees
- ◆ Differing management cultures
- ◆ Perception of lack of quality among some institutions
- ◆ Lack of capacity as staff are under pressure
- ◆ Geography – long distances separate campuses
- ◆ Poor intra / inter institutional communication
- ◆ Entrenched attitudes – race and self interest
- ◆ University / Technikon divide
- ◆ HAI / HDI divide
- ◆ The colleges all of whom have representation on ECHEA have an uncertain future

UNISA has withdrawn from the Association as it believes it cannot be members of all countrywide regional consortia. One Vice-Chancellor warns that due to lack of management capacity at departmental and at institutional levels one must be cautious about creating further demands for management capacity through the regional consortia. It is therefore preferable to use the project-based approach.

There is good cooperation between UPE and Port Elizabeth Technikon(PET). However some tentative discussions about the possibility of a merger raised serious objections from the staff. In fact one Vice-Chancellor stated that it makes good sense to create a Technological University of the Eastern Cape. UPE has an open mind about regional cooperation but is currently focussing on educational transformation – program-based approach, the NQF etc. Port Elizabeth Technikon has 10,000 students with 3 campuses. It would like to incorporate Grootfontein Agricultural College into its campus.

It seems that an opportunity was lost to merge the Eastern Cape and East London Technikons when the Rector of one had to resign and the other had not been appointed. It is alleged that ethnic factors, leadership and political factors may have constrained such a merger. The movement of the Pharmacy School from the PET to UPE under the CUP rationalization exercise in the late 1980s generated tensions which does not augur well for cooperation within the regional consortia.

The provision of generous funding from a number of sources led to the establishing of a Joint Chair of Entrepreneurship between Rhodes University, PET and the University of Limerick of Ireland.

In his prestige lecture at the University of Port Elizabeth in September 1997, the Premier of Eastern Cape, Arnold Stofile, called for bold leadership of the institutions in going beyond cooperating with each other - “ With decreasing subsidy levels, poor facilities and fierce competition from local as well as increasingly aggressive overseas based universities, our universities may well have to think more imaginatively. They may need to find core competencies to specialize..... to shed those they are not particularly good at. They may have to consider even bolder ideas such as the establishment of a University of the Eastern Cape”.

#### *FOUNDATION OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS OF THE NORTHERN METROPOLIS ( FOTIM)*

Established in early 1996, “FOTIM is a consortium consisting of thirteen higher education institutions, which offers opportunities for better cooperation, articulation and utilization of resources, through a team approach among the member institutions together with communities in the northern metropolis of South Africa, in order to meet the future educational and training needs on a regional, national and international level through a flexible delivery system”.

The member institutions are the Universities of Pretoria, Witwatersrand, Rand Afrikaans, Potchefstroom, South Africa, Vista, North-West, Medical University of South Africa and

Technikon Pretoria, Southern Africa, Witwatersrand, Northern Gauteng and Vaal Triangle.

*Governance* : The Board of FOTIM comprising one representative from each institution is the highest policy and decision making body which controls and coordinates the activities and projects of FOTIM. An Executive Committee of four persons manages the day to day activities of the Board. The administrative office is located at the University of the Witwatersrand and has a small secretariat; no director has of yet been appointed; the view is that money should be expended on projects at this stage.

*Funding* : Each institution contributed R30,000 to establish a foundation to coordinate and manage the FOTIM initiative. The Mellon Foundation provided a grant of US\$1.5 million for the GAELIC project Phase I and US\$1.2 million for Phase II. Each institution pays its own costs in the development of projects.

Objectives of FOTIM :

- Facilitate cooperation amongst higher education and research institutions, non-governmental organizations and relevant communities in the Northern Metropolis
- Transform the existing higher education practice into a comprehensive articulated system allowing students greater mobility between institutions in the region by creating and sustaining an ethos of cooperation
- Devise ways of optimal resource utilization and the prevention of unnecessary duplication through rationalization, consolidation and cooperative actions
- Develop new effective educational, research and community practice programs which fit into the National Qualification Framework

*Projects of FOTIM*

- ❑ The Gaelic Project : The Gauteng and Environs Library Consortium (GAELIC) vision is to create a virtual library with a common software system and local service interfaces, forming part of a global information community for members and clients. Its mission is to fully develop the information resources of the region for the purpose of promoting education, research and lifelong learning. The initial focus of the twelve involved libraries has been in the sharing of resources. Phase I, made possible through a grant from the Mellon Foundation involved the acquisition and implementation of the common library software system. Phase I involved six institutions and a further six institutions will be added to Phase II of the project.
- ❑ A Flexible Learning System : a workshop was held to raise awareness of opportunities offered by the idea of a flexible learning system and share experiences of those involved in collaborative projects.
- ❑ Strategic Planning Workshop : the following vision was adopted by the workshop – to facilitate opportunities for the benefit of higher education through collaborative projects. The following were identified as priority projects in addition to GAELIC :
- ❑ Information and Communication Technology – to ensure effective communication between FOTIM members through the effective linking of ICT systems of member institutions

- ❑ Articulation – to ensure progression in higher education for students of FOTIM’s member institutions
- ❑ Staff Development – professional development of academic and administrative staff for a flexible learning system, utilizing an appropriate information technology mix
- ❑ Resource Sharing – support to government at national and local level through the provision of resources, information and research support

*An Assessment and the Future of Fotim* : There has been remarkably little tension between the stakeholders given the differing backgrounds of the institutions. On the contrary the Chair reported unexpected spin offs in that e.g. HAI’s began to respect and understand the resource starved nature of the HDI’s who in turn found that they could benefit from an association with advantaged institutions. An important catalyst for the initiative is the support from Senior Management. However much work needs to be done at staff level to convince them of the benefits of cooperation. The fact that the GAELIC, a flagship of FOTIM project has been a success has been due to good leadership in that area. The geographical spread as well as the large number of institutions comprising FOTIM may prove to be an obstacle to future development. It has been suggested by some members of FOTIM that it may be preferable to divide the Consortium into a Johannesburg and a Pretoria based consortium. For the present, cooperative arrangements seem to be working to the benefit of all institutions. The real test will arise with the consideration of rationalization of course offerings and possible mergers. In this context a decision in principle has been taken to merge the Veterinary Schools of Medunsa and University of Pretoria. Discussions, which are proving to be difficult, are under way, facilitated by the Department of Education.

#### *THE ADAMASTOR TRUST : A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO REGIONAL COOPERATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE WESTERN CAPE*

There had been some cooperation between the five tertiary institutions in the Western Cape – the Universities of Cape Town, Stellenbosch, Western Cape and the Cape and Peninsula Technikons since the 1980s.

Increasing demands for admission especially from disadvantaged students with its attendant challenges and declining state subsidy has given fresh impetus to the notion of cooperation. An informal Vice-Rectors Group was formed to discuss ways and means of cooperating in such areas as libraries and purchase of expensive equipment. Inflation, the falling Rand and astronomical rise in the price of books, journals and equipment were other factors driving the process. In 1993, the Councils of the five institutions had registered the Western Cape Tertiary Institutions Trust to receive funds and jointly administer projects. By 1997 it adopted the name of Adamastor Trust and established an office and a secretariat.

With the publication of the NCHE Report, the White Paper and the Higher Education Act, the Adamastor Trust “has begun to look beyond the management of infrastructural projects to a more strategic and systemic approach to regional cooperation”. As one Vice-Rector put it, the academic vision for the region is one of being the “California of Africa”

referring to the California Master Plan of Post Secondary Education.

*Governance* : The Vice Rectors/Vice Principals from each of the five institutions comprise the Trustees of the Trust. It was a deliberate policy to let the Vice-Rectors drive the process because of their more likely availability than Vice-Chancellors. Together with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Rectors and the academic planners they constitute a group of between 20-25 who regularly attend meetings of the Trust. Considerable pressure has been put on some of the Vice Rectors who have taken on this added burden with no additional staff or time. Each project is overseen by one of the Trustees. The Director is employed on a part time basis as an Executive Consultant although due to an increasing workload he is likely to be made full time in the near future.

*Financing* : There has been no systematic financing of the consortium beyond contingency funds for meetings and projects. A number of donors have funded projects – Readers Digest, Mellon Foundation and Ford Foundation.

#### *The Projects of the Trust*

- Cape Library Cooperative – CALICO : is financed through donations from the Mellon Foundation. It aims to create a single automated, higher education library system; this initiative has resulted in savings of up to R1.7 million to date. It provides vastly improved access to students and staff of a much wider range of material in the five institutions.
- Information Literacy – INFOLIT : seeks to replace the traditional lecture centered teaching of the past by multi-sourced, student centered learning approaches which take advantage of the information revolution in the light of the massification of higher education in South Africa. It embraces several important goals : to generate information and a learning culture in the region; to facilitate the transformation of educational institutions into learning organizations through the development of an information literacy framework which advances student-centered learning; to empower citizens so that they are enabled to engage fully in the information community and to contribute to knowledge production; to ensure that citizens have the fluency to function in the global information society so as to improve the quality of life. In a recent study, Sayed and Karelse, 1997 point out the importance of race as a key variable in understanding information literacy in the region and reflects the pervasive influence of the past on the present as institutions grapple with the future.
- Science & Technology Project : makes use of 25 powerful computers to enhance learning in science and technology in the five institutions.
- The Gateway Exploratorium : operates a mobile exploratorium for science and technology education in secondary schools
- Science and Industry Leadership Initiative –SAILI : aims to increase the pool of black leaders in industry and commerce by increasing the number of black pupils passing mathematics and science at matriculation level. Those students displaying both leadership and academic potential are assisted with management training, and finally helped to find rewarding positions in the scientific and industrial world.
- The Publishing Liaison Office (PLO) : is both a copyright clearing house and a project aimed at improving the quality of undergraduate course readers.

- The Regional Expensive Equipment Project(REEP) : is a collaborative effort involving the joint purchase of expensive teaching and research equipment. It is of interest that the FRD now only funds the purchase of expensive equipment through REEP
- A School of Public Health-SOPH : is a joint postgraduate teaching initiative in the health sciences in the region. Although initiated in 1994, little headway has been made with this project as a joint venture.

Following a recent strategic planning meeting, the Adamastor Trust has agreed on a broad strategic vision - “ Through the establishment of coordinated, cost effective regional system, to promote quality higher education which is responsive to historical realities and current challenges, with an extended influence beyond the region”.

#### Future Plans

- ◆ Communicating and publicizing the strategic vision
- ◆ Investigation of alternative governance options
- ◆ Joint staff development, joint teaching at graduate level and other joint academic initiatives
- ◆ Sharing of three year rolling plans
- ◆ Joint workshops for policy issues in higher education-programs, articulation, student mobility, the NQF and Quality Assurance.

*An Assessment* : It is clear that one of the driving forces for the regional cooperative initiative is financial constraints, the libraries being the defining example – with five institutions buying the same books and expensive journals clearly did not make sense. Support for the Trust is not universal in the region. There are the skeptics. Some may not be enthusiastic because information about the projects of the Trust has not filtered down to staff levels. The divide between the historically advantaged and disadvantaged institutions remains an issue. Others take a pragmatic interest, not entirely committed and this includes some of the Senior Executives of institutions. The Adamastor Trust has reached the crossroads with respect to future development. Cooperation has to take place in an atmosphere of intense competition for students and other resources; often denigrating each other in recruiting black student talent.

The envisaged School of Public Health has been a failure; though began cooperatively after intense discussion, it has now become largely a UWC project. There is little cooperation or input from the other institutions. The establishment of a National School of Public Health at Medunsa did not help the cause of the Western Cape School of Public Health.

It is estimated that one third of the courses are not duplicated by the two Technikons, thus raising the question of the rationale for duplication of the remaining two thirds. The long experience of quality assurance of the two Technikons through SERTEC should be helpful to the consortium in developing new systems of quality assurance in response to the HEQC and SAQA

The question of merger of the two medical schools in the region has been pursued for some time without resolution. A view of one of the institutions is that that the two medical schools are large enough to sustain their undergraduate programs but cooperation

and or merger should occur at the postgraduate level. A similar situation pertains as far as cooperation and or mergers with respect to the two dental faculties in the region.

Technikons embarking on research within the single coordinated system can benefit from the long experience of universities through cooperative projects

There is the fear of the dominance of larger institutions within the consortium. Staff of one of the HDIs are not enthusiastic about the consortium, because they are not well informed, as well for reasons of protection of turf and because of historical baggage. It is claimed that the particular experience of the HDIs is generally not acknowledged. The FRD rating system tends to reinforce inequalities by putting resources into the well endowed institutions.

Sayed and Karelse, 1997 recommend greater collaboration and cooperation in the sharing of programs, resources and facilities between the five institutions to tackle the historical legacy of backlogs in information literacy.

### *THE COOPERATION AGREEMENT BETWEEN UNISA AND THE POTCHEFSTROOM UNIVERSITY FOR CHE IN LIFE SCIENCES*

Although Potchefstroom University(PU) and the University of South Africa(UNISA) have had a measure of cooperation in the life sciences since the 1960s it was in the early 1990s that a formal agreement was entered into, in order to provide the life sciences subjects of Botany, Zoology and Biology as teaching subjects aimed mainly at teacher training. A Department of Life Sciences was formed at UNISA but located at the campus of PU.

These subjects are now presented as fully developed distance education subjects with regularly revised study guides and tutorial letters and assignments by the relevant PU departments as part of their normal duties. Study materials are available in both Afrikaans and English. According to the new agreement drawn up in 1993, PU based Department of Life Sciences will be totally responsible for the theoretical and practical teaching of the following courses : Botany, Zoology, Biology, Biochemistry, Physiology, Microbiology and Geology.

In addition a Further Diploma in Biology in Education (FDE) aimed at the upgrading of teachers qualifications comprising modules from the Department of Life Sciences and the Inter-Faculty Science for Society course will be presented from 1998.

Students are accommodated at the PU campus while they attend practical courses in the laboratories. Field excursions form part of the practicals.

#### Positive Aspects of the Agreement :

- It is claimed that the this collaborative program has been very cost efficient and academically successful. Close to 1000 students attend these courses which are offered at a fraction of the cost of a residential university
- Ten full time positions are financed from this course with the benefit of increased critical mass, expertise and research outputs
- An increasing number of UNISA students register at PU for postgraduate studies
- Capacity building through the admission of disadvantaged students is a reality
- The optimal production and utilization of study material of both universities
- Innovation in the production of study material and computer assisted facilities



This program is an example of successful inter-university cooperation that combines quality of education with cost efficiency and addresses a need of the community not in a position to attend residential universities.

#### *POTCHEFSTROOM UNIVERSITY – TELEMATIC LEARNING SYSTEMS*

In this system of telematic learning, PU delivers educational programs to the student at study centers using technology such as satellite broadcasts, television channels and the computer in multi-media. The student receives all the study material on CD-ROM and then communicates with the lecturer and fellow students through the computer. Those that cannot have access to student centers can attend the live broadcasts of Africa Growth Network (AGN) or watch the videos that are available from the University. The course is led by a facilitator and the material is continually updated. Quality and international recognition are achieved by cooperative agreements with universities that have telematic experience such as California State University and the Open University in England. The following courses are currently offered in association with California State University :

- Bachelor of Business Administration
- Advanced Post-Graduate Diploma in Professional Nursing
- Advanced Post-Graduate Diploma in Recreation and Tourism Management
- Master in Business Administration (MBA)

Some 20 study centers have been established country wide and the MBA program has some 700 registered students.

#### *EDUPARK – University of the North (UN)*

Edupark opened in 1998 as an urban tertiary institution designed to accommodate a diverse range of self-funding, independent educational institutions, which will either lease or buy space. They will share the following facilities :

- An advanced computer center
- A modern library and information resource center
- State of the art lecture theatres
- Study areas with full data access
- Sports amenities
- A self contained campus village

While Edupark is expected to be ultimately self-financing, it will require R80 million to ensure completion in 2005. In addition to its own resources, the UN has procured financial assistance from a number of sources – bank loans, the South African Government, the US and Irish Governments, foreign and local private investors.

“ Intrinsic to Edupark’s unique, holistic structure is the culture of cooperative educational partnership. All institutions will interact and support one another. They will offer complementary, modular courses, giving students transferable credits for examinations passed”. Edupark will facilitate the development of flexible career paths, offering students easy access to a broad spectrum of education and practical skills training.

The Northern Province, one of the country's most impoverished regions spans an area of 116,824 square kilometers(9.6% of South Africa), has a population of 6.12 million, 47% of whom are unemployed. It does not have the educational facilities and the skilled labor

force to support mining, commercial, agricultural and manufacturing activities. Its strategic position in close proximity to Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique makes it well positioned to become the gateway to Africa. It is this reality which has shaped the concept of Edupark, situated on a 98 hectare campus in the capital city of Pietersburg.

### *Projects*

- ❑ Votek was established in response to the NCHE's Report of the role of higher education to provide skills for the work force. Located on the Edupark campus it provides technical and vocational training in education, agriculture, commerce and industry; courses in English usage and basic computer literacy and building construction to leadership and management; consultancy services as well as career support, placement and personal development services. In order to achieve these diverse services it runs six career focussed schools on the Edupark campus :
  - Commercial Studies
  - Communications
  - Applied Social Studies
  - Rural and Urban Development
  - Science and Technology
  - Hospitality and Tourism
- ❑ The Language Center, a collaborative venture between the University of the North and the University of Groningen (Netherlands) aims to promote multi-lingualism in the Northern Province and South Africa, the pivotal economic and political role in Africa and the country's economic and political relationship with the world at large. It offers language courses, journalism, translation services, communication and consultancy services designed to assist small to medium sized businesses.
- ❑ The Pietersburg School of Legal practice will provide law graduates with continuing legal education and practical training in criminal, civil and commercial law. This follows from the recommendations of the Association of Law Societies in 1998 to help law students bridge the gap between their academic studies and practice.
- ❑ The Graduate School of Business in association with the University of Pretoria and the City University of New York will offer degrees to develop and enhance Southern Africa's pool of executive managers in the private and public sectors :
  - Masters in Business Administration (MBA)
  - Masters in Development (MDev)
  - Masters in Public Administration (MPA)
  - Diploma Courses – geared towards the management of non-governmental and community based organizations.
- ❑ The Sport Science Unit will provide a monitoring and testing center for abled and disabled athletes, a sport information center for athletes and coaches, an education center for coaches and a sports medicine clinic. This unit is run under the auspices of the University of the North's Department of Kinesiology and Physical Education. The facility has received support from the local Department of Sport and Recreation and has already been awarded a contract for testing and monitoring the volleyball athletes of the Northern Province that will be considered for the South African Commonwealth and Olympic Teams.

It is too early to make any assessment of this exciting collaborative venture between a number of academic institutions, the corporate sector and overseas institutions.

#### *THE UNIVERSITY TECHNIKON COLLABORATION – UTEC*

UTEC is a project run by the Provincial Education Department in Nelspruit, Mpumalanga. The ultimate vision is to establish a Technological University to cater for local and national needs taking into account that the province has neither a University or Technikon. The UTEC Project is accommodated within the Provincial Department of Education's formal structure as part of the Directorate of Special Projects as an interim measure. The UTEC Team serving as a secretariat has as its main tasks : facilitation, coordination, lobbying and harnessing of strategies to achieve its objectives. It also serves as a link between the cooperating stakeholders. The specific objectives of UTEC are :

- ◆ Initiate and support programs aimed at increasing access and success at tertiary level
- ◆ To meet the tertiary education needs of the region
- ◆ Build capacity through bridging and feeder programs
- ◆ Initiate and enter into a process of collaboration with existing institutions
- ◆ Engage participating institutions and industry to design courseware which meets the demands of the corporate sector
- ◆ Initiate and facilitate the establishment of a permanent site and buildings for the envisaged technological university

#### *Projects*

- A National Diploma in Agriculture taken over a period of three to three and a half years; 35 students are registered for the course which commenced in 1995. The course is accredited by Technikon Pretoria
- A Further Diploma in Education (computer literacy for teachers); it has registered 30 students and the course is accredited by Rand Afrikaans University
- A science/bridging foundation course geared towards preparing students to enter the science, engineering and technology fields; 50 students were registered in 1996. The program has been franchised from Witwatersrand Technikon with full accreditation.
- A commerce/foundation bridging course aimed at preparing students to enter into commercial related studies.; 150 students were registered in 1996
- System-Red which is aimed at addressing the lack of access due to low grades in science and/or mathematics or not having taken these subjects at school; the first intake will be in 1996
- Bachelor of Commerce – 70 students are registered with UNISA
- Diploma Courses in Travel and Tourism, Government Finance, Auditing and Commerce Practice : about 600 students are registered with Technikon South Africa.
- Masters Degree in Public Policy and Development – 40 students are registered with The School of Public Policy and Management at the University of the Witwatersrand

Development of UTEC is planned in two phases :

Phase I – 1995-1997 : will focus at the major involvement of the Province through the provincial task team

Phase II – will focus mainly at the logistics involved in changing UTEC from a project into realizing the vision of establishing a University.

Currently the Development Bank of South Africa is being contracted in order to undertake a needs development study – for industry and business, for the school sector and for the institutions. This data will be used to construct a model for the kind of higher education institution that would be appropriate for the area.

The NCHE in proposing a strategy to deal with the two provinces in the country viz., Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape without a University or a Technikon underlined that higher education institutions are national institutions and are therefore accessible to all students in the country. Nevertheless, if a case is made for such institutions then the Commission suggested the amalgamation of existing colleges across different disciplines to form a nascent university or technikon. This should include the satellite campuses in the region as well as technical colleges offering higher education programs.

It is of note that although there are several existing universities and technikons with satellite campuses in the region, they have shown little interest in assisting the Province through the UTECH Project in its quest to establish a University or Technikon.

While the UTEC initiative is to be commended, it is timely for the CHE to appoint a task team to undertake feasibility studies for the possible establishment of a higher education institution in the Province.

### *SCHOOLS OF PUBLIC HEALTH*

During the 1990's with profound political changes unfolding in South Africa, there was an increasing realization that the health sector was in need of fundamental reform. One component of this need was a discussion of the establishment of Schools of Public Health, a glaring deficiency of the health establishment. There was broad consensus around the establishment of three public health schools – one each in the Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban regions. A core principal was that it was to be a joint undertaking between all the relevant institutions in a region.

#### *Western Cape School of Public Health*

It was in this context that the Public Health Program (PHP) at the University of Western Cape was established and a Director of the Program was appointed in 1993 with two linked roles :

- The first was to develop and strengthen education and research in schools and faculties responsible for the health and allied social sciences at UWC

- The second was to lead the University's efforts in developing a Regional School of Public Health(SOPH)

Among the activities were to :

- investigate the needs of undergraduate students in the area of public health
- build teaching capacity in the area of public health
- provide modules in public health for masters programs
- provide short courses in critical areas of public health to various target groups
- offer an M. Phil in Public Health
- develop research capacity in public health

By 1998 the PHP had achieved the following :

- ♦ implemented the first Masters Program in Public Health in South Africa
- ♦ facilitated multi-disciplinary undergraduate courses in public health
- ♦ provided short course training in various aspects of public health through regular summer and winter schools
- ♦ participated in and led policy initiatives in various areas of public health
- ♦ initiated various research activities in public health.

“ Thus the PHP has successfully responded to the objectives set for it by the University and, in its first four years, launched itself as a significant and innovative initiative in Public Health with an influence not only within the Western Cape but also in South Africa, and increasingly, on the African continent.”( UWC PHP,1998 ).

Progress towards the establishment of a Regional School of Public Health has been very limited. Although there has been an agreed plan of action to locate the SOPH at UWC, endorsed by the Senate and Councils of the various institutions, little concrete headway has been made.

While considerable progress has been made by the ADAMASTOR TRUST in the implementation of various programs, in the words of one of the Trustees, the SOPH has been a failure despite the existence of the PHP at UWC for over five years. It is difficult to ascertain the reasons for this but it may be related to the fact that the two medical schools are located at the Universities of Cape Town and Stellenbosch. Hence there may be a reluctance on the part of those academics to make a large investment of time and energy in the project. It appears that unless there is a compelling incentive or an external driving force, the SOPH as a collaborative project of the Adamastor Trust is unlikely to be realized in the near future.

#### *Thusano School of Public Health*

The Thusano School of Public Health (TSPH), previously known as the Transvaal School of Public Health ( founded in 1991) is both an institutional and an inter-institutional program for the education and training of students in public health. Following a tour of the USA in 1994, planning for the School proceeded through to 1996/97 with the Masters Course in Public Health beginning in 1998. Thusano has the following aims :

- to create and enhance public health leadership
- to develop new strategies and methods for improving the health of the public
- initiate and conduct research in the public health domain

- to provide flexible, multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral learning opportunities for public health workers

The partners in the TSPH are : Potchefstroom University for CHE and Universities of the North, Pretoria, Venda and Witwatersrand. The degree of Master in Public Health will be offered by the Universities of Pretoria and Witwatersrand in collaboration with the School.

There is regular consultation between the diverse set of institutions in order to address the imbalances of the past and move towards a more equitable framework. The School is being established as a Section 21 Company and is governed by a Board of Trustees with three representatives per institution making a Board of 15 members. Two persons attend in their own capacity and the third represents the University. The offices of the School are located in a neutral venue in the Medical Research Council (MRC) Offices in Pretoria which is overseen by an Executive Officer, a secretarial assistant and a secretary liaising with the course coordinators.

Start up funding has been provided by the Kellogg Foundation with an initial grant of R2 million. In addition income is derived from the short courses and a subscription by each institution of R60,000 per year for three years.

The TSPH has not been established without its share of problems. Among these are the protection of turf especially by the larger institutions, personality differences and unequal partners. Further the Section 21 Company is a loose alliance of partners with the notion of institutional autonomy asserting itself.

#### *KwaZulu-Natal School of Public Health*

Some progress has been made in establishing this School. A facilitator was appointed in 1997 under the auspices of esATI to investigate the feasibility of establishing such a School. He has recently made the following recommendations :

- appoint an action oriented leader for the public health initiative who will act as the focal point
- establish a Public Health Service Curriculum Development, Research and Coordination Unit
- collect data about other South African Public Health Curriculum Development efforts
- develop a group of public health core courses
- institutions to grant credit for approved courses
- establish the kinds of linkages that would be required to develop the School
- explore possibilities of funding
- develop service courses for the Department of Health.

As a starting point, a series of courses leading to certificates, diplomas and degrees are being established. It is hoped that the strengths of the different institutions can be mobilized to contribute to these courses. The qualification would be accredited by esATI. Subsidy for the courses would be accessed by esATI and divided pro-rata based on the contribution of each institution. A Director of the School has been appointed and a small coordinating secretariat is being established. This interesting trajectory has the potential of bringing institutions together in order to develop a unified School of Public Health to

serve the vast area of KwaZulu/Natal. Planning is proceeding during the course of 1998 and the first courses are likely to be offered in 1999.

### *National School of Public Health*

During the course of the work of the NCHE, it came to its notice that a School of Public Health was to be established at Medunsa with the support of the Department of Health. As the NCHE was in the process of recommending a single coordinated system of higher education away from the fragmentation of the past, the establishment of this School seemed inappropriate considering that joint initiatives were establishing three such schools in the country. Accordingly, the Minister of Education was informed and further progress with the school seems to have been halted for the duration of the Commissions work.

However such a School, termed the National School of Public Health has now been established in MEDUNSA and a Dean of the School has been appointed. According to the Medunsa brochure Exploratio “ In 1997 a historic decision was taken by the provincial Ministers/MECs for Health and Education to develop a National School of Public Health of the Medical University of Southern Africa”. If and to what extent the National Departments of Health and Education whose responsibility it is to establish such schools were involved is unclear. The brochure further states that “The NSPH will strive to have a national character through the development of an extensive distance learning approach to public health education that will become the educational gateway for various learning communities”.

Although there is little or no staff infrastructure, 47 students have been enrolled. Courses are offered through the George Washington University in the USA by distance education. Monthly seminars are held, some of them abroad. One such seminar is planned to take place in Israel between George Washington University, Hadassah University in Israel and Medunsa. Ten students and a number of staff from South Africa are expected to attend. Plans are afoot to raise substantial sums of money overseas, especially in the USA.

As of yet no formal relationship between the three Regional Schools and the National School have emerged. It has further emerged there has been little discussion with the three emerging Regional Schools prior to the establishment of the National School of Public Health. However the Senior Management at Medunsa has indicated that discussions with the National Department of Health and the regional public health schools are underway.

## COMPARATIVE STUDIES

### *University of the West Indies*

In 1948 a College was established in Jamaica and a School of Agriculture in Trinidad as constituent colleges of the University of London. In 1972 three campuses – Jamaica with all Faculties including medicine but excluding engineering; Barbados with liberal arts and law and Trinidad with liberal arts and engineering amalgamated to form the University of the West Indies. There was a single university council with the Vice-Chancellor located in Jamaica with Pro Vice-Chancellors in the two other campuses. There were logistical problems given the island disposition of the campuses and long distances between them. Further, the dominance of the larger campus of Jamaica caused some disquiet. However similar political cultures of democratic states were decisive in keeping the campuses together. Trinidad with the discovery of oil flourished economically while Jamaica was dominant but poor. In due course Trinidad built its own medical school and planned a technology institute. There followed greater devolution of powers to each of the campuses thereby reducing the power of the dominant Jamaica campus e.g. examiners meetings were held on each of the three campuses. A hotel school was established in Barbados given the importance of tourism to the region. Distance education programs were initiated and this led to students from the other islands feeding into the University. Financial imbalances were handled within the regional economic bloc with rationalization of course offerings. After cricket, the University of the West Indies is considered the most binding factor in the islands of the region.

### *University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland (UBLS)*

These three former protectorates established the UBLS in the early 1960s. The main campus was located at Roma in Lesotho with the other campuses in Botswana and Swaziland. There was one University Council, one Senate, one Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice Chancellors at the other campuses. The Deans and most of the senior staff were in the Roma campus while the other campuses had heads of schools comprising the main faculties; the heads of departments were in Roma while the subject leaders were at the other campuses. This was seen as a transitional structure, which in time would lead to the full development of the two other campuses.

There was a distinct difference in the resource base of the campuses. While academically Roma was the dominant campus, it was also located in the poorest of the three countries. Secondly there was a difference in the political cultures of the three countries :

Swaziland – strong feudal kingdom ; Lesotho – a semi-democratic state where the power of the monarchy as well as of democracy was systematically undermined; Botswana – an open democracy. This clearly had an impact on how these three territories viewed university autonomy and academic freedom. In this climate, politicians rooted for their own campuses. In the middle of 1975 with the demand for greater autonomy the UBLS broke into its three constituent parts, forming a University in each region. The failure to agree on a devolution model especially with respect to financial matters precipitated the change. Lesotho saw this as an infringement on its central campus. Chief Leabua Jonathan, Prime Minister of Lesotho unilaterally declared the Lesotho campus as an independent University. The other two were taken by surprise at this maneuver. For a while the campuses of Botswana and Swaziland came together to form the University of



Botswana and Swaziland. In the 1980s there emerged two separate universities of Botswana and Swaziland.

#### *Australia*

In Australia in the 1980s, under the impetus of Minister Dawkins, 65 universities, colleges of advanced education and technical institutions were merged into 36 multi-campus institutions. The following lessons are worthy of note from this exercise

- voluntary amalgamations were more successful than mandatory ones; however compulsory mergers were necessary to achieve cost effectiveness
- successful mergers were undertaken within permissible guidelines-proximity of institutions, academic coherence of programs etc
- integrated models were more successful than federated ones; for the latter to work required strong leadership, new organizational structures, new symbols and geographical proximity
- up front costs of mergers were not insignificant
- the process was difficult; numerous suspicions and difficulties had to be overcome
- the mergers have led to considerable mission drift with diploma and certificate programs being drastically reduced

#### *California(USA)*

The state of California in the United States has under its master plan formulated a three tier system comprising research universities, four year degree awarding colleges and a network of community colleges. Entrance to the system is regulated by strict legislation. While only the best qualified applicants would be able to register at a research university, articulation and mobility is an important feature of the system. The cost differentials of the sectors are significant being approximately 4:2:1 for the research, four year degree and community colleges respectively. The success of the master plan has been attributed to its flexibility, mobility and making post secondary education available to a broad mass of the population amounting to a participation rate of some 70% of the relevant age cohort. The significance of this in a knowledge driven and technological society cannot be underestimated.

#### *New York State(USA)*

The New York State System comprises some ninety institutions and close to a half a million students. Each institution has a great deal of autonomy but has one Board of Governors or Council. The merit of the system is that financial planning and allocation, a central admissions office, building consortium etc are centrally undertaken. While the system works successfully, the drawback is political interference when the Governor of the State of a different political party is elected. In such cases there is a tendency to make political appointments to the Board of Governors with discontinuity and the potential for disruption.

#### *The United Kingdom*

Rowley (1997) carried out a survey for the Higher Education Funding Council of England of 30 mergers in the UK between 1987 and 1994. Typically these mergers took

place between two institutions of unequal size, the larger one having 5-10,000 students and the smaller one having less than a 1,000. Among the benefits were :

- an enhanced academic portfolio
- the attainment of quality with respect to the smaller institution
- the different cultures resulted in a “dynamic mix” of staff of different educational philosophies and backgrounds
- unanticipated synergies resulted from the meeting of the various types and levels of staff
- restructuring of governance resulted in greater transparency in the management process and improved governance

Rowley concludes that HEI mergers enjoy a greater success rate than mergers in industry. The main problems associated with mergers are personal costs of staff in moving house, disruption of academic and research activities and students having to move to a new campus and adapt to new culture, courses etc.

Fielden and Markham( 1997), in a review of mergers conclude “that the rationale behind any merger should be strategic and academic and not predicated upon the prospect of cost savings”. They conclude with three recommendations :

- Allow enough time for the merger process : this will enable thorough evaluations to take place, and for trust and good relationship to be established between the institutions
- Do not underestimate the costs and time involved in the areas of – integration of administrative IT systems and procedures, resolving property rights and staff development
- Prepare for the massive demands that will be made on management time before, during and after the merger

Kings College, London in a series of mergers dating back to the 1980s is reinventing itself in its merger with United Medical Schools of Guys and St Thomas’s Hospitals and the Institute of Psychiatry into an institution of 16,500 students, a large institution by UK standards. The merger among other aims was to “bring themselves out of the single professional discipline ghetto” and expose future doctors to a wide range of science and other disciplines like medical ethics and encourage them to mix with students taking other courses. Joint research teams are emerging as a result of the merger – in age related diseases, psychological medicine, Afro-Caribbean medicine etc that will be able to compete with the best of the research centers in the country such as in Oxford and Cambridge for research income (Guardian Higher Education, 1998)

#### *African Continent*

There is little evidence of cooperative efforts in Africa that may serve as models for the transformation of South Africa’s higher education sector e.g. in Kenya there is virtually no cooperative programs between its five public universities and over a dozen private institutions offering higher education programs (Pokhariyal,1998). In addition there is also very little cooperation with industry.

## UNIVERSITY SCIENCE, HUMANITIES AND ENGINEERING PARTNERSHIPS IN AFRICA – USHEPIA

“USHEPIA promotes collaboration amongst established African researchers in the generation and dissemination of knowledge with the aim of building institutional and human capacity in cash strapped African universities. In 1994 the first USHEPIA Fellowships was awarded for postgraduate students from a number of African universities to come to the University of Cape Town”. Students have come to the University of Cape Town from Botswana, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Kenya and Tanzania. Some are taking Ph.Ds while others are involved in collaborative research projects. Areas covered include geography, meteorology, statistics, mechanical engineering, geology, physics, metallurgy, agronomy, agriculture. The Humanities Fellows were involved in history, religious studies, music education, architecture, communication skills etc. This program funded both by the University of Cape Town and donor agencies seems to be a remarkably productive program in establishing linkages with African Universities, in promoting graduate studies and collaborative research. There should be considerable space for other South African universities and technikons to develop collaborative programs in a number of African countries. Donor agencies are likely to respond favorably for requests for financial support.

## DISCUSSION

Since the early 1990s a number of regional consortia and other partnerships have emerged in trying to contribute to a more efficient and better quality higher education sector. Even though gains at this time may be minimal, it is leading to a better understanding between institutions and lessons are being learnt that should be beneficial as the framework for transformation of the HES as embodied in the NCHE Report, the White Paper and the Higher Education Act are implemented.

The governance of each of the regional consortia is vested in a Board of Trustees. It is the decision and policy making body of the consortia. Its size varies from 10 to 35 members depending on the number of institutions that comprise the consortia- generally two to three members represent each institution. Most constitute an executive committee of three to eight members from the Board. This structure appears to work well. esATI has found the Board of 35 members cumbersome as a working committee and it has decided to constitute an executive committee of eight members. Senior management at the level Vice Chancellors/Rectors /Vice Principals/Vice Rectors are a significant part of the representation on the Boards. In the case of ECHEA where the Board is represented solely by Vice-Chancellors/Rectors, it has led to difficulties of attendance as well as of constituting meetings. The Free State Consortium is finding the inclusion of the province, labor and business on the Board a decided advantage e.g. the protocol formulated by members of this Trust enabled the province to access a substantial amount of Reconstruction and Development Program funds from the central government

The smallest consortium is COLISA with three institutions while the largest is the Free State Higher and Further Education Consortium with 29 members. The optimum size of a consortium has not been established and will remain a debatable point for the foreseeable future. It has been suggested that for reasons of efficiency and geography, FOTIM with 13 institutions should split into a Johannesburg and a Pretoria consortium.

There is considerable variation in the financial contribution by member institutions between each consortium. In esATI, 0.1% of the operating budget of each institution is contributed to a central fund. This amounts to R1.2 million per annum. esATI's budget is R2.4 million, the balance being contributed largely by donors. There is disquiet among some members of the consortium as to whether this generous contribution results in a fair rate of return for investment. At the other extreme is the Adamastor Trust where member institutions make no regular contributions except for meetings and projects. In most cases the funds are supplemented by donor agencies, the Mellon and Ford Foundations being most prominent in funding consortia. Further, parastatals such as the FRD are tending to fund the purchasing of expensive equipment through the consortia. Both the White Paper and the Planning Document of the Department of Education make provision for accessing incentive funds for the development of programs in regional consortia. However details, amounts and criteria for accessing such earmarked funding is still awaited.

Most consortia take the view that modest amounts should be spent on funding a central office and the bulk should be utilized on project development. It is for this reason that Fotim has not appointed a Director. esATI is an exception to this rule. Given the disquiet expressed, this consortium should assess whether it is in its interests to down size its central office and move projects to the institutions. The concern with its offices located on one campus is a further reason to consider this shift.

The preferred mode of functioning of each of the consortia is through projects. While most consortia outline up to ten projects as part of the program, on the average no more than two to three have made significant headway. Most projects are of relatively recent origin and it would therefore be premature to come to definitive conclusions about their success or shortcomings.

Most notable among the successful projects is the library collaboration. The astronomical rise in the costs of library materials has been a key driving force for the project while the generous assistance of donor funding has been an important incentive. In some cases good leadership has led to the success of the venture. In one case, the library cooperation as a successful flagship project has encouraged the development of other projects within the consortium. The Adamastor Trust already claims significant savings on its CALICO project.

The Central Applications Office(CAO) seems to be making good progress. The NCHE recommended that the regional CAOs should be the prototypes for an eventual National Admissions Office( NAO). The preliminary feasibility studies undertaken by esATI of such a CAO is encouraging with distinct possibilities of efficiency and cost savings. The involvement and facilitation of the exercise by the Department of Education is also promising.

The Career Prep Project in the Free State with over 200 registered students in 1997 has made good progress and is an example of cooperation between the HES and the FES. Although the formal projects of ECHEA are yet to be translated into action, the Chair of Joint Entrepreneurship between Rhodes University, Port Elizabeth Technikon and University of Limmerick in Ireland has been firmly established. Another successful venture is the Cooperative Agreement between UNISA and Potchefstroom University in the training of students in the biological sciences. Nearly a thousand students, many of them disadvantaged take these courses at low cost. In addition a number of them are attracted into postgraduate studies at Potchefstroom University.

The location of offices in one of the institutions especially if it is a large institution in the partnership leads to suspicions of dominance by that institution. However there are significant cost savings by the location of offices in one of the institutions. These benefits should be carefully assessed through an open discussion within the consortium.

The formation of COLISA with over 225,000 students provides vast opportunities for collaboration and creating a cost effective distance education system. It could produce quality software with economies of scale, share library and printing resources, develop

joint learning centers and share examination centers. Whether a confederal structure will be able to achieve these objectives is indeed doubtful as is seen by the inability of some partners to attend meetings and the failure to collaborate in the offering of the Distance Education Diploma.

The Free State Consortium is the only one that incorporates the Further Education Sector as well as the Provincial Department of Education. The early evidence indicates that their inclusion have been beneficial to the Consortium e.g. it was instrumental in assisting the Province in acquiring Reconstruction and Development Funds through a well motivated proposal.

The considerably smaller FES than the HES in South Africa, is inverse of that which obtains in most countries. Further, articulation and mobility between the two systems is virtually non-existent. Martin Trow, 1987 of the University of California comments on this anomaly with respect to the system in the UK which is as applicable to South Africa, given the common origin of the two systems : “ What strikes an outsider..... is the enormous gulf that exists between further and the higher education in Britain. Further and higher education are simply not part of a common system of education, marked by diversity and a broad division of labor. And yet.....these colleges of further education are remarkably similar to our community colleges which are very much part of the higher education system of the USA-they are linked in every ones mind as part of a common differentiated enterprise. But the greatest price the UK pays for its elite system of higher education.....it does not address one of the most important requirements of this age-the creation of a broadly educated society that continues to learn. A learning society.....is central to the great social and economic transformations that Britain along with all other advanced societies is currently undergoing.” A key solution to South Africa’s post secondary system is to expand the FES relative to the HES in order to provide the requisite middle level skills as well as a cost effectiveness. The NQF provides a pathway for articulation and mobility, which should be exploited. The step taken by the Free State Higher and Further Education Trust provides a means of progressing towards this objective.

The critique of the Free State Trust is that it fails to differentiate between the distinctiveness of the FES and HES’s. Secondly, a consortium with 29 partners is cumbersome and unwieldy. The provision of sub- groups within the consortium as the HES and FES and possibly College Sectors could be an approach to resolve this issue. A number of key working committees or task groups could be established to undertake the work of the Trust with the full Trust meetings being held to coordinate and ratify policies. The innovative programs of the Trust such as the Career Prep Program, the needs development study by the Development Bank and the staff development program are vital contributions towards transforming the HES. Given the broad composition of partners of the Trust, it is well placed to play a facilitating role in resolving the location of the various colleges of teacher training, agriculture, nursing etc in terms of the recent document “The Incorporation of Colleges into the Higher Education Sector” released by the Department of Education.(1998).

Vast distances between institutions such as that which pertains in the Eastern Cape pose formidable obstacles for collaboration within ECHEA. Further, the differences in the resource base as well as differences in culture between universities and technikons complicate the issues. The poorly resourced institutions are giving priority to resolving their most pressing issues such as collecting unpaid fees, downsizing the staff establishment, mobilizing resources for their cash strapped institutions. Others are grappling with quality and planning issues. Institutions should however take cognizance of the fact that regional cooperation is one of the four priority areas identified by the Department of Education in its planning priorities.

Of the ten institutions in the ECHEA consortium, only one, namely Port Elizabeth Technikon has more than 5,000 students. The rest are barely able to retain their students numbers and most accommodate between 2 and 3000 students. The question arises as to their viability as comprehensive research institutions offering the full spectrum of studies at undergraduate and postgraduate levels with costly management and administrative structures.

Fragmentation as one of the legacies of the Apartheid system is an integral part of the current HES. This exists between HAIs and HDIs, Universities and Technikons, English speaking and Afrikaans speaking institutions, high and low status institutions, residential and distance institutions. Clearly the bridging of these divides is a formidable barrier for cooperation efforts, rationalization of programs let alone the thought of mergers or amalgamation. This results in a lack of a shared vision and often paying lip service to the projects of the consortia. A good example is the failure to attend meetings by some partners and duplicating course of other institutions despite pledges to the contrary in the statement of intent in setting up the consortia.

A redeeming feature at least in one consortia is that these underlying divides have led to a better understanding of each others position. In FOTIM, the HAIs have come to terms with the disadvantage of the HDIs while the latter appreciate that they can benefit from association with better resourced institutions. Similarly, universities can benefit in developing quality assurance systems from the Technikon SERTEC experience. On the other hand Technikons which are about to embark on a research trajectory can benefit from the long tradition of the research ethos at the Universities.

In addition to the regional consortia there has developed a number of novel partnerships within the SA HES – the EDUPARK concept involving the University of the North with a range of partners, the Regional Schools of Public Health to address a critical area of education and training in health and the telematic concept entered into by the University of Potchefstroom with California State University. The progress and contribution of these innovative partnerships towards the transformation of the HES should be a matter of much interest.

There are at least four additional areas which lends themselves to collaboration within regional consortia - i. management and leadership skills ii strategic planning iii the teaching and learning interface and iv regional development

**Management and Leadership** -The caution about the lack of management/skills capacity to lead and develop the consortia is well made. Therefore it is imperative that another layer of bureaucracy is not created while guarding against overworking already stretched managers. The provision of incentive funding for this purpose as well as the favorable disposition of donors to regional consortia should contribute towards the alleviation of this problem. There is therefore an urgent need to establish a development program for management and leadership skills.

**Strategic Planning** – The National and Institutional Planning Framework for the HES released by the DOE in May 1998 lists Inter-Institutional Cooperation as one of its four priorities. It believes that this approach could eliminate unnecessary duplication in academic and administrative provision. It will therefore provide incentive funds from the provision of earmarked funds for joint offering of academic programs, inter-institutional research and joint utilization of physical and human resources. Further the NCHE Report emphasized the importance of regional structures in planning and the White Paper in the regional review of institutional plans. However, there is little evidence of inter-institutional cooperation in regional planning within the existing regional consortia despite many other areas of cooperation. On the contrary unilateral planning within institutions such as closing of departments and retrenching of staff is happening on a wide scale.

**The Learning and Teaching Interface** – although this lies at the heart of the transformation of the HES, it has yet to be taken seriously within the regional consortia. Given the admission of an increasing number of disadvantaged underprepared students and the concomitant high failure rates, the importance of transforming this aspect can hardly be underestimated. At least three areas of relevance are associated with academic development – student development, staff development and curriculum change and innovation. The sharing of experience and best practice in these areas is a priority. Curriculum transformation and innovation through inter-disciplinary courses, discourse about africanisation/indigenisation of subject matter, course offerings in such areas as gender studies, area studies, peace studies, conflict resolution etc provide considerable space and opportunities for regional collaboration. The modularization of courses provides flexibility for students to pace their studies tailored to their abilities and financial means. More importantly it will enable students to access modules across institutions in the region once agreement has been reached within the consortium on the mutual granting of credits.

**Regional Development** – The notion of thinking globally and acting regionally translates into regional development partnerships of thinking and learning in which industrial clusters of higher education institutions, companies and agencies frequently interact to provide high level skills and competencies by mobilizing the latest and best knowledge to produce goods and services (Porter, 1990 1995; Kanter 1995; Goddard, 1997). In addition linking research with the needs of regional and the national economy will need greater regional dialogue and coordination with financial support between universities and other organizations in the region (Court, 1997). Mulroney (1992) describes such a network in North Melbourne, Australia “encompassing combinations of universities, TAFE Colleges, local councils, support schools and industry for educational and training links, entry to post secondary study, technology transfer, credit transfer, sharing of



laboratories and equipment etc.” Thus the consortia could exploit these vast opportunities for regional development

Despite the progress made with the range of collaborative arrangements discussed in this study there is little evidence of significant cost savings or improvements in efficiency. Most of them are add on programs, which will enrich the HES. However for rationalization of course offerings or moves towards merger some additional incentive or driving force will be required. The incentives of earmarked funding provided for in the Higher Education Act as well as in the White Paper should stimulate such cooperation further. However unless decisive steps are taken through financial leverage, rationalization of course offerings, mergers or amalgamation with the possibility of transcending the Apartheid landscape of past institutional arrangements with significant cost savings and improvements in efficiency are unlikely to occur.

In this context Peter Buchanan, in a commissioned report by UNITECH ( An Association of Marketing and Communications Personnel of Southern African Higher Education Institutions) entitled - A 1998 Assessment of Marketing and Communications In Higher Education In South Africa states “Clearly, at present the society has an overwhelming demand for practical skill development. Government should establish a geographically dispersed large number of institutions to provide training in immediately usable skills in the economy, and a much smaller number of collegiate institutions. Instead the government is engaged in creating a relative free for all, in which institutions compete as best as they can for students nationwide regardless of institutional capability. The result is chaos, and the outcome is almost certain to be mediocrity across the board..... Differentiation among institutions of higher education must be restored to protect the system’s integrity, and the necessary investments made to insure that the quality of education in similar types of institutions is uniform among them. With the majority of student bodies rapidly becoming Black South Africans, the government should merge tertiary institutions of the same type in the same geographical location to eliminate duplication, stop needless competition and conserve resources.....Across the fence mergers should be mandated by government on the grounds of sheer economic efficiency, regardless of all other factors. Durban’s technikons are the obvious example. There is a similar situation in Pretoria though more complicated, a further example in Port Elizabeth. Six institutions should become three. There are a thousand excuses for maintaining six of them, but it is simply wrong to do so in such a resource poor environment”.

Among those that appear priority sites for rationalization of course offerings and/or mergers are the East London and Border Technikons, the ML Sultan and Natal Technikons, QwaQwa Campus with the University of the Free State, the Health Science Faculties in the Western Cape and Kwa-Zulu/Natal, the Veterinary Faculties of Medunsa and Pretoria.

Planning, consultation and provision of resources are essential for successful mergers. International experience indicates that these exercises are likely to be complex, time consuming, demanding of management time and costly at least in the initial phases.

A number of other studies also caution about the economic benefits of mergers (Meeks, 1977, Mueller, 1980, Fielden, 1991, Abbot, 1996). The Dawkins reconstruction of the Australian Higher Education System (Harman, 1989) set norms for institutions to be eligible for federal funding as part of the new unified system of higher education :

- ❑ Eligible for federal funding – student load of at least 2000
- ❑ Eligible for federal funding for a broad teaching profile with some specialized research activity – student load of at least 5000
- ❑ Eligible for federal funding for comprehensive involvement in teaching and research – student load of at least 8000

It would be of great interest if investigations and planning of the South African HES were undertaken along these norms. The Australian Minister appointed a task force to effect these mergers – which reports indicate have been successfully implemented despite initial misgivings.

Similar radical restructuring was effected in the Dutch non-university sector where by in 1987, 314 of the 348 Hoger Beropsonderwijs (HBO) institutions had merged into 52 new institutions while 34 remained independent.

These two cases studies contradict the conventional wisdom of change in higher education systems is gradual, piecemeal and largely internally motivated ( Becher & Kogan, 1980, Van Vugt, 1989). The two cases differ markedly in that in Australian the binary system was abolished whereas the Dutch restructuring entrenched it.

It has been claimed that the merger of Royal Holloway College and Bedford Colleges ‘unleashed a great wave of creativity among staff and created a culture of openness to new ideas’ and the most important single factor in assuring the success of a merger is good management from the top (Pritchard, 1993). This investigator also found unpleasant features as consequences of mergers –loss of jobs, being passed over for senior appointments, a clash of organizational cultures etc.

In an analysis of structural change in the Australian and British higher education systems Mahony (1996) found that intersectorial mergers had the reputation of being difficult, research was seen as a legitimization of the new post binary institutions at the expense of undergraduate education and the new unitary system in Australia has been called the Uniform National System because the built in diversity of the system has been abolished. There is however emerging a new regrouping of institutions based on the quality audit of 1994, which will lead inevitably to differentiation. Therefore “fears of homogenization may be interpreted as the anxieties of a transition period from which the universities are now moving to a system more heterogeneous than which it replaced”(Mahony, 1994).

At the heart of the system of mergers is the division of authority between the local campus and system wide authority. The central executive is generally ascribed three crucial roles :

- ❑ Budgetary allocation amongst the various campuses

- ❑ Planning including rationalization of programs between campuses and sponsoring of innovative endeavors
- ❑ Representing the university to government and the community

Mergers often result in the addition of new bureaucratic layers and the centralization of power away from individuals, departments, faculties and senates of the constituent campuses.

Thompson, (1985) outlines at least five variables for a successful merger :

- Geography – physical distances separating institutions should not be too great
- The transition is likely to occur more smoothly if there has been an experience of previous cooperation
- If complementary instructional programs exist and are not seen as competing, it will lead to greater diversification of educational experiences
- If there is enhancement of the quality of academic programs – academic excellence
- If there is political will for mergers from the state which can influence the Councils and Chief Executives

“It is important to remember that while the achievement of a successful merger requires skilful leaders, dedicated to the idea of change, the merger process does not easily transcend normal organizational politics and conflicts”(Meek,1988)

Thompson also enumerates certain essential steps that are necessary in planning a successful merger :

- A detailed action plan through a strategic planning exercise
- Clear articulation of the goals and objectives of the merger
- Each institution to identify its strengths and weaknesses as well as the advantages and disadvantages of the merger
- A steering/feasibility committee to be established – to include representatives of the institutions, outside consultants for their expertise and objectivity, community leaders and legal counsel
- The steering committee to allow every constituency to have an input
- The merger should be undertaken within the framework of the prevailing national and state legislation
- Negotiating reports to be referred to the executive/management committees of the institutions for feedback and ratification of decisions
- Several task forces or sub-committees will have to be established to deal with some of the major issues – governance, finance, personnel, academic programs, students etc
- A successful merger takes time and a period of five years may be required for completion of the process

The success or failure of the merger will depend among factors on the ability, skill, and foresight of the central executive. “At the heart of the university – whatever the relative emphasis upon teaching, research or public service – is the faculty (academic staff). If the multi-campus system makes a positive contribution to the quality of the faculty found on each campus, it may said to be a success, regardless of other shortcomings”(Lee and Bowen,1971). It must be remembered that usually the loyalty of the average academic is directed towards his/her discipline and not towards the institution.

There is a tendency of academics in particular to view changes of the type enacted in Australia by the sweeping Dawkins reforms as imposed by the power available to one actor, in this case the government by virtue of controlling the purse. Goedegebuure and Meek, 1991 propose an alternative view - “ the degree and extent of change in a complex system, such as higher education, is dependent upon the interaction of interests, strategic behavior, norms and values, and ideologies of all concerned. Moreover, the more that these factors tend to coincide or converge, the more likely it is that the change will be extensive and ubiquitous”. It appears that these conditions currently prevail in the South African Higher Education System during this period in its transition and transformation.

## LESSONS LEARNED

What lessons can be learnt from the established regional consortia and other partnerships; are there best practices that can be adopted by consortia. Due to the fact that most consortia are no more than a few years old, their projects even newer and they are still evolving, it would be premature to be definitive on this aspect. Yet there are tentative conclusions, if not lessons that will be helpful for the development the consortia.

- ❑ The consortia should take advantage of the planning document of the Department of Education, undertake regional strategic planning and access incentive funds for this purpose
- ❑ Representation on Boards of Trustees should include not only Vice-Chancellors but also other representatives of the institutions so that meetings could be constituted and attended on a more regular basis.
- ❑ Communication of decisions taken in the Boards of Consortia with the rest of the institutions leaves much to be desired. A variety of strategies (newsletters, e-mail, workshops etc) should be deployed to expeditiously communicate these decisions to the various levels of the campus, in particular to the faculty boards and senates; feedback from these constituencies should be conveyed to the Board
- ❑ A small executive/ working committee of 5-8 members for the day to day management of the affairs of the Board and which can meet as frequently as necessary has been a successful administrative model for the consortia; the Board which will remain the policy and decision making body should delegate appropriate powers to the Executive committee to enable it to carry out its tasks effectively
- ❑ The enlargement of the Board to include carefully chosen representatives from outside the higher education sector such as from the provincial administration, the corporate sector and labor
- ❑ Keeping the costs and the number of employees at the central office of the consortia to a minimum while locating as many projects as possible within the institutions is an important lesson for adoption.
- ❑ It is preferable at least in the initial phases to carefully choose a few projects and see it to its completion e.g. the successful library projects of CALICO of the Adamastor Trust and GAELIC of FOTIM have been a catalyst for the development of other projects in the consortia
- ❑ The geographical proximity of institutions within a consortium is an important factor in its successful functioning e.g. the wide distances that separate the ECHEA institutions are a real impediment to collaboration in that region. On the other hand the close proximity of the Adamastor Trust institutions gives it a decided advantage. Therefore geographic separation will be a determinant as to which and the number of institutions that will constitute a consortium
- ❑ Cleavages as between the HDIs and the HAIs, universities and technikons should be openly discussed and an understanding reached in order to avoid suspicions and undermining of the consortium
- ❑ The loose confederal model adopted e.g. by COLISA is not conducive to effective decision making or collaboration. International experience e.g. as happened in Australia as a result of the Dawkins reforms of the seventies confirms this finding

- ❑ The funding of the purchase of expensive equipment through the consortia as adopted by the FRD is a good example of leverage that external funders can generate to bring about effective collaboration. The Mellon Foundation had adopted a similar strategy in funding library projects.
- ❑ The inclusion of the Further Education Sector in some relationship to the HES is a challenging one and should be explored by all consortia
- ❑ SAUVCA and CTP should begin to discuss and debate the place of regional collaboration and mergers in the HES
- ❑ Unless decisive measures are taken through financial leverage by the Ministry on the advice of the CHE, regional consortia are unlikely to lead to rationalization of programs or mergers and amalgamations.

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